

GETTING BACK: A BIBLICAL MODEL OF CONGREGATIONAL RESTORATION
BY RESTORING THE FOUNDATION OF GOD-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS
THROUGH CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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ABSTRACT

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Deviation from God's image had caused this ministry context to experience unhealthy relationships and fellowship with God and one another. The context for this ministry project was experiencing the demoralizing effects of trying to do ministry without the benefit of healthy relationships and fellowship. The purpose of this project was to present a biblical model of communal restorative ministry that stimulates growth and promotes thriving ministries. The methodology utilized a mixed-methods approach and qualitative action research including seminars, journal writing and pre and post testing. The results and success of the project model were greater participation in ministry and fellowship.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thanks and gratitude is extended to God for what has emerged from this journey of obtaining a Doctor of Ministry Degree. Because of God's leading and directing, the passion to complete this work was made possible.

Many thanks go to the Washington/Moore Scholars who also labored on this journey under the able leadership of Dr. Angela D. Washington and Dr. Donnell J. Moore.

Much appreciation is extended to the staff, administration and leadership of the United Theological Seminary's Doctoral Studies department. Your commitment to higher education and life-long learning has benefited many congregations throughout the country.

Finally, special thanks to Reverend D. P. Gordon and the Blooming Lighthouse Ministries for allowing this work to take place in your lives and ministry. May God's restoration forever continue transforming your lives.

DEDICATION

This Doctor of Ministry Degree is dedicated to my wife Kenya, son Marcus II, daughters Ja'Queria and Kennedy. Your love and support were the difference in bringing this process to completion.

To my mother and brothers, thank you for continue encouragement; you were right there.

INTRODUCTION

If the attitudes of church members are to be positively changed toward radical relational and fellowship growth and involvement, it must be done by getting back to seeing each other as the image of God. The normative journey of many churches sometimes places them in a position where members find themselves in spiritual, financial, and emotional crisis.

Bible-based congregational growth and development seeks to address and answer the pending crisis of such congregations. Scripture serves not only as the guide or governing authority for laity and leadership, but also possesses the power to liberate each from crisis. God-centered relationships and fellowship is achieved when the church resorts to the answers afforded by scripture regarding how we should treat one another; as the body of Christ.

The concept of crisis from broken relationships and fellowship was experienced first hand and through the word of God, has provided liberation from the complex crises of abuse, poverty, criminality, and a lack of self-identity. The context of ministry for this Doctor of Ministry project is one suffering under the crises of a lack of genuine spiritual relationships and authentic spiritual fellowship. By addressing these crises and by providing the answers of affirmative identity and renewed spirituality through Bible-based solutions and examples, positive attitudinal change will occur as it relates to achieving God-centered relationships through Christian fellowship. The purpose of this

project was to present a biblical model of communal restorative ministry that stimulates growth and promotes thriving ministries. The first chapter, which is the ministry focus, defines the area of ministry that this project is addressing. It also explains the area of ministry that was chosen, gives special insights that bear on this topic, and offers a clear outline of the context of the project being discussed.

In chapter two, the state of the art in this ministry model will be discussed. A narrative analysis of literature related to the project, including relevant concepts and other models of ministry will be provided. In addition, other pertinent works in the area of focus will be discussed.

Chapter three provides theoretical foundations that support Bible-based relationships that lead to healthy Christ centered fellowship as a vehicle to affect attitudinal change toward the body of Christ historically, biblically, and theologically.

Chapter four formulates the research methodology of the project. It will focus on a project that will measure and assess the attitudinal change of members of the Blooming Lighthouse Ministries toward God-centered relationship through Christ-centered fellowship. Pre and posttest, sermons, seminars and journaling were administered to evaluate the impact of God-centered relationships through Christ-centered fellowship that bring about congregational restoration.

In chapter five, the field experience of the project is discussed. A view of what occurred during the actual implementation of the project that impacted the study will be presented. The results of the project, a description of the experience, and the data collected are documented in this chapter.

The final chapter of the document gives the reflection upon the field experience, summation, and conclusions. An overview of the assumptions and conditions that affected this study is also presented. Other conditions that may have influenced the results of the project are mentioned.

It is hoped that this document will serve as a useful tool to affect positive attitudinal change toward God-centered relationships that lead to Christ-centered fellowship and congregational restoration.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Marcus Roshawn Glass – The Early Years

On Dec. 29, 1973, Marcus Roshawn Glass was born in Matty Hersee Hospital, a charity hospital in Meridian, Mississippi to a single mother who was not certain who the father was. A housing project is where my early years were lived with my mother. We shared a home with several cousins and aunts. Despite the crowded situation, a measure of happiness was prevalent among my family. My mother was a loving parent who gave all she had to my happiness. In such close living quarters, a strong sense of family was developed in my early days and they were filled with love. Summers were bright and full of joy. Holidays were full of laughter and cheer. There are fond recollections of the holidays of my young childhood when my mother and aunts would shower me with gifts. It was a happy time. Life was wonderful.

There was one cousin that we lived with us that a special bond was shared with. More than best friends, the two of us were like brothers and inseparable. Still, even with my aunts and cousins surrounding me, there was that something missing. There was a longing for someone to fill the vacant role of father in my life.

Young and impressionable, Marcus was quick to welcome his mother's current boyfriend. He was a military man who became a father-figure to him. However, like many things that would happen in later years that illusion was brutally shattered.

One day while at the barbershop, Marcus' mom and her boyfriend began to argue over whether a haircut for Marcus was necessary. The argument got out of hand. When his mom attempted to take Marcus from the shop without getting a haircut, her boyfriend chased us. His mom jumped inside the car with him and quickly locked the door. Not one to be thwarted, her boyfriend picked up a brick and threw it through the rear window of the car. There was an iron pipe lying on the seat. He grabbed the pipe and shattered the front window. Then, he hit Marcus' mother in the mouth with the pipe. There sat a young boy in the back seat crying, watching his mother lie unconscious. It was in that moment that the pangs of not having a father who could provide security and guidance hit like that iron pipe hit his mother. Later in the months to follow, tearful moments mounted as Marcus watched his cousins leave with their fathers on the weekends as he wondered where his father was. Marcus would look to his mom for answers and she would simply say, "I am your mother and your father." This would bring temporary comfort until the next weekend. Eventually, Marcus began to accept the fact that his mother was the closest thing there would ever be in his life to having a father.

Growing up, life in the housing projects taught Marcus many hard lessons. At an early age, he quickly learned how to fight in order to survive. Even as a five year old, Marcus was embroiled in many fights in the neighborhood. Violence was all around. At six years old, Marcus witness to two people dying—one from homicide and the other from suicide. Death was real to young Marcus. Unfortunately, death became a natural occurrence. Through the years, Marcus would witness the death of many more people.

Childhood – Searching for a Home

Upon reaching school age, the family constantly moved. Every year, Marcus would move to another school. Once in the second grade, Marcus began to express himself through writing.

There was a strong passion for writing poems and short stories within him. As an only child, Marcus and his mom shared a close relationship, and so when they moved to a rural area, happiness blossomed, but loneliness quickly set in because the rest of their family that was usually around was no longer present. Writing was an outlet that helped him cope with those feelings of loneliness.

In that same year, a man was brought into his life as his father. Marcus was ecstatic to finally have a dad. They spent a lot of time together. It was as if his life was finally coming together. Soon their newly reunited family moved to Biloxi, Mississippi. Marcus life was filled with happiness to have a real family, but at the same time, there were feelings of hatred for having to leave his hometown.

Life in Biloxi was not so bad. There was a lot of time spent visiting New Orleans during the summer and traveling to the beach for vacation. Soon, the family moved back to Meridian, Mississippi.

Being back in Meridian made Marcus ecstatic. Life was good for a while, but problems found Marcus. Not long after the move back, the relationship between Marcus and his dad began to break down. Marcus' dad was often away from home leading to a divorce later that year. This break-up caused strain on the family emotionally and financially. Going to school with old clothes, hand-me-downs and holes in his shoes was Marcus' station in life. Too often, this made him the punch line of cruel jokes spouted by classmates. His prayers had been to go back to Meridian. Marcus would sit in class and do nothing because he felt the things happening in his life were all his fault. Thoughts that in his selfishness of wanting to come back home, his dad would still be around and his mother would not be struggling the way that she was. The guilt spiraled into self-hate and he began to get into fights. Marcus' suffering extended scholastically.

His grades plummeted from A's and B's to failing. Marcus failed the fourth grade! Unable to manage on her own, his mother was forced to move back in with her mother. She began to drink and neglect Marcus. She would leave him for long periods of time in the care of her sister.

Marcus' childhood was now loneliness and abandonment.

Marcus' aunt had a live-in boyfriend who sold drugs and smoked weed. Marcus was often left at home alone with him. When his aunt would leave, her boyfriend would blow smoke into Marcus' nostrils. This introduced Marcus to the world of drugs at a young age. Her boyfriend would make him count the money he collected from drug sales and forced him to place the illegal product in bags for distribution.

By the time the sixth grade came around, Marcus was living with his aunt and her boyfriend full-time. Once again there was a school transfer. One night while sleeping, men in masks with guns awakened him asking for money. Marcus sat in the room blindfolded while the masked men discussed how they were going to kill him. The men finally decided that it was not worth it and left him alive.

Later that year, it was arranged for Marcus to spend the summer in Toledo, Ohio. Instead of a positive move, Toledo sent Marcus further in the wrong direction. While in Ohio, Marcus lived with a cousin. After a short time, however, they were both kicked out of the house that actually belonged to Marcus' cousin's girlfriend. We were homeless and resorted to living out of a cousin's car. By this time, options were limited. In all honesty, this may have been a hidden blessing, although it meant that the streets would become his home. Had he been in Mississippi at the time of the drug raid, an arrest and placement in a juvenile detention facility would have been his fate. Upon his eventual return to Meridian, living with his mother was once again his placement. She had moved to another part of town and a change in schools was in order.

Marcus' mom lived in an area that was bad news for him. To add to an already difficult situation, they moved in with a man who was a crack cocaine dealer. Though new to the area, there was an opportunity for Marcus to enter a dance contest and win the \$500 prize. Excited over his winnings and accomplishment, the bus was his route to hurry home. That happiness was short lived. As he exited the bus, three boys who thought the prize money was on his person attacked him. Street knowledge afforded Marcus the ability to get away, but everyday afterward, would mean having to leave the bus running to the apartment.

Things eventually got so bad that withdrawal from his current school and transferring to another school by forging his mother's signature seemed to be his only option. When his mother discovered what was done, she did not disapprove, but the new live-in boyfriend disagreed. He had Marcus transferred back to the old school. A reprieve came later that same year when his mother's boyfriend got a house and they moved to a different part of town. The last part of his seventh grade year was spent in a school that was conducive to getting an education.

Marcus' new stepfather was mean sometimes, but he was also fair. He made sure that attendance at school and monitoring schoolwork were a priority to ensure that everything on Marcus' part was being done to make good grades. During this year, playing sports became a part of his world. This discipline had a profound impact on his life. Positive people who pushed him in the right direction were always around. Staying on task academically and improving his grades were important. Marcus also renewed his passion for writing short stories; one was eventually used by the school in a Christmas holiday production. Life was finally starting to look up for Marcus.

A year passed and it was Christmas once again. This holiday season would prove to be the worst of Marcus' young life. It was December 29th, Marcus' birthday. His mother had

promised to allow him to use her car to go skating as a birthday gift. Just as he got ready to leave, his stepdad came home high and said that he and his mom were going out. There was no explaining that Marcus had been given permission to use the car to go to the skating rink. Marcus' stepdad would not budge and refused to allow him to use the car. Angry, Marcus's response was to storm out of the house and slam the door. His stepdad followed right behind him with an extension cord. He used the extension cord to strike Marcus on the leg. Blood immediately began to stream down his leg. Marcus ran to his mom to show her what had done. Disinterested or afraid, she sent Marcus to his room. Angry and disappointed at his mother, Marcus grabbed his clothes, packed his bags, and left the house, vowing to never return.

The Teen Years – Looking for a Place to Belong

Now homeless, the first two weeks were wonderful. There was a sense of freedom; staying wherever, doing whatever, and answering to no one. A friend and his mother allowed him to live with them for a while. One day arriving from school, walking into the house and overhearing his friend and his mom talking was gut wrenching. The mom wanted to know when Marcus would be leaving. She stated that they did not have enough food and money to feed another woman's child. Being appreciative all that they had already done for him and not wanting to be a burden, he walked into the room and informed them that his mother had asked him to come home. It was a lie, but Marcus thought that it was for the best.

Marcus began sleeping in the back of cars that had been left unlocked. He found himself making friends with people so that he could get a meal or maybe even spend the night at their house. He moved around a lot, staying with different people for sometimes months at a time. Despite his unstable living conditions, he did not stop attending school. He also continued to be active in sports. Truthfully though, he was out on the streets, not because he could not go back

home, but because he was a stubborn kid with a misdirected sense of pride and a serious attitude problem.

One day while homeless, Marcus was offered the opportunity to join a gang. Because of his desire to be loved and cared for, he joined the gang. His newfound friends took care of him. They found a place for him to stay and protected him from the dangers of street life, or so Marcus thought. After joining the gang, Marcus was involved in endless fighting, but he considered it easy compensation for friendship and security. Despite all of this, he continued to go to school. Marcus began to excel in his studies and gain recognition because of his intellectual and physical abilities. He was student of the year and named most athletic during his freshman year of high school. Marcus was on the starting lineup of the varsity football team and maintained Honor Roll status. It was his life away from school that brought sadness and drama to his world.

One day after school, Marcus crossed the invisible line that separates gang turfs. He went to visit a young lady on a side of town that his gang was forbidden to go. While there, a rival gang member knocked on the door to visit the young lady also. Although he was an ex-boyfriend of the young woman, he was upset by Marcus' presence and began to beat the young lady. Marcus stepped in to protect the girl; with his attention now on Marcus, the ex-boyfriend realized that Marcus was from a rival gang and heated words and threats were exchanged. The ex-boyfriend's fellow gang members heard the altercation and ran up to help him. One of the gang members pulled a gun and pointed it at Marcus. He told Marcus not to move. The ex-boyfriend went to his car and returned with a crowbar. He ran up to Marcus and struck Marcus on the head; blood began to pour from the wound. The young lady's uncle pulled Marcus back into the house and called the ambulance. Marcus was rushed to the emergency room where he received

seventeen staples to close the gash in his head. Doctors later told him that if he had been struck a half-inch lower he would have likely died immediately.

While in the hospital, none of Marcus' relatives came to visit. The only people that came to see him were fellow gang members. However, their visit was not to comfort or wish him to get well soon. They did not embrace Marcus or made him feel loved. Instead, they talked about how he had failed to represent and how he had brought shame to the gang by getting beat up. After Marcus arrived home from the hospital, they gave him a choice, he had to either find his attackers from the other gang to shoot them or either be shot himself. They gave Marcus a gun and some drugs to get high as they went looking for retaliation. They did not find the other gang bangers, so they sprayed the neighborhood with bullets instead. Thankfully no one was killed or injured. This incident coupled with others made Marcus realize that he had grown tired of gang life. Marcus was tired of carrying guns and iron pipes. He was tired of always looking over his shoulder. He began to try to get away from his gang affiliates.

Marcus found an unlikely friend in one of his classmates. Marcus had taken a special interest in one of the girls at his school. This young lady had also attracted the interest of another boy. Not liking the competition, we would trade angry stares with one another. We quickly became fast enemies. One day after school while at a mutual friend's house, we came face to face. Trying to ignore the guy, Marcus continued listening to music. Just then, one of his favorite songs started to play and Marcus began to sing. This song happened to be the other guy's favorite song too and he started to sing also. By the grace of God, halfway through the song, the guy and Marcus were harmonizing. They started to laugh and began to talk for the first time. Marcus began to share his story. The young man invited him to come home with him to meet his mother and brother. After meeting them, the young man's mother agreed that Marcus should

come to live with them. Not long afterward, Marcus' mother signed over her parental rights and Marcus was officially in a stable home.

Marcus' life started to get back on the right track; he stopped hanging with the gang and spent more time with his new family. He learned precious values from his new family. As a teenager, Marcus learned how to love and express love—something that had become a vague memory from his early childhood years. Marcus learned how to tell his family he loved them. This was something he had never done in the past. They accepted Marcus as one of their family. There was no favoritism, no getting cursed out, and no fighting. Marcus had come to a time in his life where he did not have to fight. His new family took him to church. Marcus was happy.

Things were going well for a couple of years until Marcus' new mother lost her job. She could not afford to pay for the house they were living in. They were forced to move back to Little Rock, Arkansas. Marcus did not go with them because he wanted to finish high school at home. He was already established in the school's athletic program and the school had a reputation for landing athletic scholarships for its students. Unfortunately this meant that once again Marcus homeless.

The Lost Found by the Lord

Marcus started living with different families again and began working at a Subway restaurant, resolved not to go back to the gang life. One day while working alone at Subway, three boys in masks ran through the door with guns. Marcus quickly grabbed the phone and ran to the back and shut himself in the walk-in cooler. The boys were not there to rob the store. They were there to kill him. It was the guys who had attacked him and nearly killed him a few years earlier. They ran to the cooler in the back where Marcus was and began to bang on the door and engage their weapons. They were yelling that they were going to kill him. When Marcus heard

the voices, his heart sank. Marcus felt like it was over. He knew that he had not always been good, but he was not ready to die. There was so much he wanted to do. There was so much he wanted to be. Immediately Marcus fell down on his knees with tears in his eyes and began to talk to God. Marcus told God that if He would just let him live, he would give his life to Him. It was at that moment that Marcus began to pour his soul out to the Lord. It was also at that moment that Marcus got saved. When Marcus got up off his knees, the boys were gone and the police had arrived. Marcus left Subway that day, got his clothes, and went to his preacher's house and knocked on the door. Marcus stood in the door with tears in his eyes and told the preacher and his wife that if they did not take him in, he would not last two weeks on his own. The preacher and his wife could not have children at the time. They prayed about it and took Marcus in.

Marcus was offered a place to stay, showered him with love, and provided constant opportunities to fellowship with God. This preacher was an anointed and gifted preacher and stayed in revival throughout the year. Every week Marcus went to church and experienced God; he began to grow spiritually. One Sunday morning, Marcus heard the voice of God call his name as the preacher was talking about what Christ's blood had done in the life of poor people. It seemed as if Christ himself had taken Marcus by the hand and led him down the aisle of the church. With his heart full and tears flowing from his eyes, Marcus gave his life to Christ.

Marcus became very active in the church; he started teaching the youth Sunday school and later, the men's Sunday school. The pastor saw how interested he was in the word and started allowing him to speak on Sunday mornings before he would preach. This motivated Marcus to study the word of God daily. Marcus would see his pastor carrying books everyday reading and began to emulate him. One night while in revival, the spirit of God consumed Marcus. He began to feel a fire down in his heart that would not go away. People began to speak

into his life and tell him that he had a calling from God. Yet Marcus was not sure. He did not act on it immediately because he felt if he had, he would be following people instead of God.

Marcus wanted to be sure. One night before going to sleep, Marcus prayed to God and asked God to show him what to do with his life. That night when laying down to sleep, Marcus had a dream about an old man standing on an island. The man was calling out to Marcus to come over where he was. Marcus yelled back to the old man, "I cannot, I am afraid." The old man asked why and Marcus replied, "There is a big snake in the water and if I try to cross, it will eat me." The man said to Marcus, "Keep your eyes on me and you can make it." Marcus started to go across and was awakened from the dream by a snake that had entered his room through a hole in the wall. Marcus told his pastor about the dream and was told to pray and read the Bible. That morning, Marcus prayed and opened his Bible. It fell open to Philippians 4:9 which states, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you." After hearing this, Marcus ran upstairs, fell in his pastor's arms and said, "The Lord has called me to preach. Help me please."

When beginning the eleventh grade, Marcus was speaking at youth conferences and writing for the school newspaper. Still excelling in football and having joined the Fellowship of Christian Student Athletes, an organization designed to allow students to have a closer relationship with God. There was a total change in Marcus' lifestyle. The pastor started calling Marcus his son and told him to look at him as a father. Before the end of the eleventh grade year Marcus began to preach the word of God. At the end of his senior year in high school, the positions of captain of the football team, chaplain for Fellowship of Christian Student Athletes, and was dating the Homecoming Queen were his! That year Marcus knee was injured badly and the opportunity to receive a football scholarship were missed. Instead, a full music vocal

scholarship was in his future. Happiness was once again in his life—the scholarship and love was also his.

Young Adulthood –The Saint versus the Sinner

Upon graduating from high school and beginning college was a whole new world. Having been recruited by several schools, Marcus' final choice was a school that was reputable and close to home because he did not want to leave family nor his sweetheart, Regina. Living on campus and coming home every weekend was the plan. Marcus was thankful for where God had brought him. This once homeless young man was now getting an education from a major university and in love with his high school sweetheart. There were friends to make at school and lots of things to experience. College was a good experience, but there were many distractions that took Marcus' focus away from school and God and focused his mind on things of the world. There were parties and on campus activities to participate in. It all lead to Marcus not going home on the weekends and staying on campus instead. Conversations with his sweetheart became more and more infrequent.

One night, partying with some friends while sitting on a bridge with a six-pack of beer, they asked Marcus if he wanted some. Knowing he had not taken a drink since his tenth grade year of high school, that part of his life had been put all behind him and an oath had been made not to drink anymore. That night, that vow was broken and that infamous drink was taken. That one drink started Marcus down a road that would lead back to a lot of the things that had been repented of and vowed would never do again. Skipping classes and hanging out all night with his fraternity brothers was the new norm. These people had watched Marcus transform from the holy man on campus to one who was now worldly and living loosely. Some of his peers began to question his Christianity and would often ask what kind of man of God would behave the way

they witnessed him acting. It would never fail that as soon as Marcus was thoroughly intoxicated someone would say, “Hey everybody, you know he says he is a preacher!” Despite his state, feelings forced him to defend his calling by telling them that he once was and remained a preacher. Some believed him and chose not to judge him while others said that this could not be the man of God he claimed to be.

Whatever doubts there may have been about his calling were quickly assuaged by a conversation that transpired with Marcus’ adoptive father. The first time that Marcus got drunk after his relapse, was the night before being expected to preach the very next day, but there was much felt guilt. Marcus called his father and told him what had happened the night before and said he did not feel like he was worthy to preach the word anymore. His father told him, “You are never worthy to preach God’s word, but He allowed you to for His Name’s sake.” Realizing that God had chosen him despite who he was, Marcus never doubted his calling again.

Still, there were travels down a road that would take Marcus a long time to get back from. His romantic life spiraled downward as he and his sweetheart grew apart. Being less involved with the church greatly affected Regina’s feelings toward him. Marcus’ calls began being routed through her sisters and her sisters would tell him that she was busy. One day one of her sisters told him bluntly, “Can’t you see she don’t like you anymore?” This broke Marcus’ heart. Marcus’ integrity and character had been lost, his college career began to suffer academically as well and being placed on academic probation. After failing classes, the university forced Marcus to drop out for a semester. Too afraid to go home to tell his dad that he had failed, Marcus stayed on campus. Homeless again! Living with different fraternity brothers going from dorm to dorm and house to house until one day a frat brother told him, “You’re just up here doing nothing. You

need to go home and get yourself together and try again later.” Those words were harsh, but it was what was needed to hear and do.

With his future hanging in the balance, wonder began to surface about his foster family that had moved to Arkansas. Over the years, there were attempts to find them without success. Marcus missed them and longed to see them. One day while still at school, Marcus picked up the phone book and started searching for his family again. A search ensued by calling numbers listed for people with the same last name as his family. Finally, someone answered the phone that knew his family. They gave Marcus the contact information. To his surprise and joy his foster mom answered the phone when he called. Marcus poured out his heart to her, telling her everything that happened over the years since they had last seen or talked to one another; they wept. He told her he was still homeless and asked if he could come home. She said yes and sent a plane ticket.

Reunited with his family, Marcus got a job and started attending church regularly. Sometimes by moving on and letting go, things happen and have a way of working themselves out. Regina started to call again and said how much she missed him. They would talk everyday for hours. Time was spent traveling home to visit her when there was some spare time. Though they had dated for several years, they had never been sexually intimate. Not wanting to risk growing apart again, they decided to become intimate. From the first time of intimacy, Regina became pregnant. She was still living at home with her parents and her parents, disappointed, chastised her often for getting pregnant. The decision was made to move back home and take care of them both. Employment had to be secured to support the baby that was on the way. They began to face pressure and censure from friends, family, and the church. People were upset that this Christian relationship had committed sin. They did not want to get married, but by this time,

they had two children, Marcus II and Jaqueria. Marcus was being crucified by his home church because he was preaching the word and yet had fathered children without being married. Feeling the pressure, Regina and Marcus married. They were brought to the church after Bible study one night and were marriage.

Not many months after the marriage, the call to his first church came. This church was a prestigious church that had a lot of educators and well-to-do people as members. They began to teach Marcus the hard knocks of pastoring. He began attending Selma University to pursue a religious degree. Many ideas were brought to the church that was outright rejected.

A bi-vocational pastor, working two jobs to put his wife through nursing school, they moved into projects where they struggled with finances. Times were hard. They developed the habit of saving quarters in a jar, but times were so lean that they had to spend those meager savings. Heartbroken that there was no way to save money for his children's future, Marcus made up his mind he would move to a place that would offer better opportunities for his family as soon as God allowed. They remained in Mississippi seven years before relocating to Albany, Georgia.

Adulthood: Pursuing the Dream

In 2001, Marcus and his family moved to Georgia. He immediately got a job and then his calling to a church came after being there for a month. Returning to school with a new attitude was the beginning, while continuing to work diligently at ministry. A program to help failing schools and failing students called Helping Others Pass; abbreviated H. O. P. was a first major initiative. The ministry began to grow. People began to join the ministry and things began to prosper in their lives. They soon moved into the house they had always dreamed about. Enjoying life and thanking God for the move to Georgia was a daily devotion. Marcus' heart was poured

into helping the kids every day from seven in the morning until six in the evening. The program began with fourteen kids and before long, 400 students had joined the program. The program was offered in a gym by the school board to house the children after school.

The gym was run down and needed a lot of work. Much time was spent each day cleaning and painting so that the gym was presentable for the kids. Marcus petitioned the school board and the Public Safety Director to provide funds to help renovate the gym. It was denied. This rejection made him more determined to get the job done.

There was a march organized to travel from the gym to the city council meeting. 300 hundred students march to City Hall singing songs and holding hands for a town meeting. They set a record for the most people to ever attend a City Hall meeting in that town. Still, they were denied any help from the city meeting. However, their efforts did not go unrecognized. A representative from State Farm Bureau offered a \$50,000 grant to clean up the building. A week later, came the news by the school superintendent that the kids were to be turned over to the Public Safety Director because the money from the grant had already been allocated and there were no funds left to pay Marcus a salary to run the program. Marcus refused to be a part of what he saw as a misuse of funds. They took the gym that they gave him and banned him from all meetings and boards. This was his first experience of witnessing the corruption of the local government firsthand. Marcus found himself in a fight with local officials who were drinking buddies and he was not welcome in their group.

In the meantime, Marcus spent a lot of time working with other kids and their families but, did not pay enough attention to his own. He did a lot of revivals and spent little time at home. He would spend his days at school working on his degree and his afternoons running his after school program. His wife was working in a local hospital's emergency room as a registered

nurse. She had often expressed how fed up she was with ministry life and how tired she was of being a first lady. The relationship became strained and after a while they separated. Marcus and Regina spent time apart but Marcus felt like they should try and work it out. They got back together to give it another try. Despite the effort, Regina had already moved on and so Marcus moved into his own place. The strain of losing his family plunged Marcus into a depression. He began to shut down. Not only was he experiencing trouble on the home front, but problems were brewing within his church as well. He found that his church did not support him in his stand against the local officials. He prayed to God for a release, but it was a year later before God would allow him to leave.

Again, Marcus began to struggle financially. He found work with a friend who was trying to build a school in his church. The friend had promised that he would put Marcus on his payroll as soon as the school was up and running. Marcus worked very hard to assist his friend build the school. He worked with universities and churches to recruit students and create classes that would offer school credit for attendance. After a month, the school was fully operational and had over seventy-five students enrolled. Months would go by and Marcus would never receive any financial compensation for his hard work—only empty promises. While waiting for the salary that he had been promised, Marcus was kicked out of his house and was homeless again. A friend, also a preacher, took him in and allowed him to stay.

Marcus began to seek God to see why he was going through all of this misfortune. The conclusion that Marcus came to was that his fault lay in putting his ministry ahead of his family. He chose the wrong order of priorities. He began to pray and ask God for forgiveness. Marcus continued to go to school and get various certifications. At one seminar, one of the instructors gave Marcus some valuable advice during lunch. She suggested that he tell his story. Marcus

began his after school program again in the county where he was now living. He followed the instructor's advice and began to share his story. He received finances through teaching seminars and training sessions that he offered at various schools and churches. People began to call him to speak to inspire young people to get out of gangs and to continue to strive for excellence. Marcus was amazed to discover that all the pain, heartache, and misfortune had finally led him to his purpose.

Moving Forward – Living with Purpose

After a length of time, Marcus met a beautiful woman name Kenya. He and Kenya later married. Marcus began working for the local fire department and after a year of marriage, Marcus and Kenya's union was blessed with the birth of their child, Kennedy. For a time, Marcus would have his kids from his previous marriage only on the weekends. As time passed, the children began to complain that their mother was neglecting them. Stepping up to be the father that he never had, Marcus was granted custody of Marcus II and Jaqueria.

In 2010 Marcus was called to a church in the city of Pelham, Georgia. He wanted to restore the community especially after taking a look at the poverty rate. He saw that the community needed restoration. He wanted to make a difference. He attempted to lead the church into the community for the purpose of restoration, but they rebelled against him. So in 2011, Marcus started a ministry called True Worship. This ministry was designed to go out into the community and have Bible studies and prayer meetings in the city. Marcus realized that there were people in the community just like him. They needed someone to come in and relate to their situation and bring restoration from their bondage.

Context

Pelham, Georgia

In 2010, Pastor Marcus Glass moved his ministry to the small town of Pelham, Georgia. Located in Mitchell County, Pelham is a southwest Georgia community that was founded in 1881. It is currently home to approximately 3,898 people. The male and female population is nearly balanced with men representing 45.5% of the citizens and women representing 54.5%. The town is divided mainly into three ethnicities: African-American, Caucasian, and Hispanic. African-Americans number 2,339, representing roughly 60% of the population. There are 1,408 (36.1%) Caucasians and 110 (2.8%) Hispanics.

Like most rural areas in Georgia, Pelham's economy has historically centered on agriculture. With the progression of technology and improvements in farm machinery, much of Pelham's labor force was left to find jobs elsewhere. Many went to work in nearby factories and other industrial jobs. Still the average income for individuals living in Pelham is \$23,493, well below the state of Georgia's average income for residents, which is \$47,590. In fact, statistics show that about 60% of Pelham's residents live below the poverty level. Of that percentage, approximately 16% live in severe poverty (below 50% of the poverty level). Many of these families are single mothers struggling to eke out a living for them and their children. For more than a few, their options are severely limited due to lack of education. About 33% of Pelham's adults lack a high school diploma.

Despite the dire economic situation, residents of Pelham manifest a religious spirit. A sizable portion of the population professes an adherence to some particular faith. The overwhelming majority (nearly three-fourths of the churching population) reported that they adhered to the Southern Baptist faith. However, a significant portion, 56%, remains unchurched.

When Pastor Glass arrived in Pelham in 2010, he saw a community ripe for restoration. Sadly the church to which he was initially called did not share this vision. In fact, active evangelism was non-existent in all the churches of Pelham. Shocked by this, Pastor Glass sought to motivate his members to engage in the evangelizing ministry, but they rebelled. After spending an especially frustrating time trying to move a close-minded people forward, Pastor Glass realized that God had another purpose for him within the rural community of Pelham. In 2011, after much prayer and contemplation, he was empowered by the Holy Spirit to help his brother bring restoration to his congregation.

Blooming Lighthouse Ministries

Blooming Lighthouse Ministries emerged from a traditional Missionary Baptist church that was dying slowly from the formalism of traditional values. In 2007, they called a young energetic pastor who had a heart for ministry and pastoring the community. Reverend Damion Gordon changed the traditional dynamics of the church. The congregation began to come to church on Sunday morning hearing relevant and sound doctrine from their young charismatic pastor. The church took in over thirty members who came in and rededicated themselves to coming to worship. The Holy Spirit was visible in the worship service. They worshiped in a small facility that had a seating capacity of seventy-five. The church was overflowing on some Sundays and other Sundays they were half full. Although the people were coming there were no visible signs of out reach ministries in the church. Reverend Gordon began to understand that he had been conformed into the traditional Baptist church thinking. He began to pray and seek counsel on what to do to grow the church. In 2011, the church moved into a new facility. The people were excited about the move, but were not ready for the change in ministry. The problem of the Blooming Light Ministries is sinful immoralities (disobedience to God's word), the loss of

confidence in God and in themselves (leadership towards the congregation and vice versa), nonexistent worship practices, and verbal domestic abuse was also evident in their non-existent Christian fellowship.

Today, the fledgling congregation has grown to a total membership of two hundred on the roll. The ethnicity of the church is 100% African-American. Nearly all are from low-income neighborhoods and many are unemployed. The familial groups are mostly comprised of single mothers and their children. Most of the people in the congregation are family members by blood.

Since many of the members are Christians and they are eager to learn and embrace the Word. However, their socio-economic status often causes issues and challenges to their faith. When the congregation comes together for worship, they are enveloped in formalism. Yet when they go back out into the world, to their homes, and into the community, they often leave their inner church behind. Confronted with the concerns for their families' physical needs, they lose their focus for worship and the fervor for service. Not to their discredit, they remain the same sincere, openhearted people that appeared for worship on Sunday morning, but on Monday when the bills were due and Tuesday when there was no food in the refrigerator, they were justifiably self-concerned because they have not yet learned to balance their problems with their faith. As a result, most members found it difficult to operate in a caring and loving environment. Not only is it a concept that remains foreign to the community, but also, it is an idea difficult for many to embrace because they are victims of their own circumstances. This is evidenced by the influx of new members who come and leave with-in a few months. It has therefore been painful for Pastor Gordon to watch as his flock hears the word of God, but do not become agents for change.

Synergy

The English word synergy is derived from the Latin word *synergia* and the Greek word *synergos*. In its original forms, synergy denotes a spirit of working together. Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary (Eleventh Edition) defines synergy as “a mutually advantageous conjunction or compatibility of distinct business participants or elements.” Based on these explanations, synergy is when two or more compatible entities merge to work together for the mutual advantage of the combined group to produce a desired result. For the purpose of this project, the desired result is to motivate and equip the members of Blooming Light Ministries to be restored back to God and one another. To bring this goal to fruition, it will take the combined efforts and experience of both the pastor and congregation along with God’s grace and mercy and the blessed power of the Holy Spirit.

Although Pastor Marcus is a Mississippi native and relatively new to Pelham, Georgia, he is no stranger to the struggle of this congregation. Through his life experiences, he is able to relate to their circumstances. He understands the single mother who is juggling bills, trying to care for her children, and all the while finding love in all the wrong places. He knows this problem of abuse well because for years, he watched his mother do the same thing. He understands the young men who are searching for their place in this world, asserting their manhood, and yet frustrated by the going-nowhere-fast cycle that they cannot seem to break. He was that young man just a few years ago. Pastor Marcus can also empathize with the long road that his congregation must travel to find their way to the Lord.

Pastor Marcus share in the experience of his flock better enabling him to understand the challenges and obstacles that he is likely to face in encouraging the congregation toward restoration. However, his life story also raises within him an awareness of the need to be restored

and reformed. Like him, they had become so wrapped up in their own abuse that they took little time to show love and caring to others. With the benefit of hindsight, Pastor Marcus was able to see that many of those that were hurting were hurting others. Without spiritual guidance, they fail to understand how to deal with their abuse.

Reflecting on his childhood and teenage years, Pastor Marcus realizes that he was also hurt and God purposed it to be so in order to bring purpose in his life. Thankfully, through his foster families, he was exposed to his spiritual nature and he was able to discover the important aspect of moving past abuse and learning to love. While he is deeply ingratiated to all who had a part in helping him come to Christ, there are many others in the world who suffer similar circumstances, but have not been as fortunate to have spiritual people in their lives to lead them to Christ. Pastor Marcus feels that his understanding of their plight will enable him to facilitate and motivate the church for restoration and reformation.

At the same time, Pastor Marcus acknowledges that there is much for him to learn from his ministry context as well. Merriam-Webster, referenced earlier, implies that a synergetic relationship is mutually advantageous. No one person has all the answers. It is only through the sharing of knowledge and experiences that the best solution is achieved. That is synergy.

Getting to know this congregation has taught the writer greatly beyond his own personal experiences. Working side by side with his members and helping them to make gradual, but necessary changes in their lives is teaching him the virtues of love and caring. That same love is transferred as he and this congregation gets back to their first love. The progress of Blooming Light Ministries continues to help build the writer's confidence and faith that God is blessing his work of restoration and motivates him to stay the course despite obstacles. The writer also feels that by nurturing the spirit of restoration within the members of Blooming Lighthouse ministries,

together the pastor and his congregation will become a phenomenal force in carrying the Gospel to the unchurched community.

In summary, it is Pastor Marcus' belief that he and his current context fill the needs of the other in order to accomplish the will of God as purposed. Pastor Marcus' role is to teach his congregation to have healthy relationships and fellowship. The context role will be to inspire the ministry to cultivate patience, broaden its acceptance of all types of people, and support their leader in displaying love in the life of their congregation. It is a relationship that is mutually advantageous and will produce a glorious result beyond what either could have done alone.

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

In the words of Clare Boothe Luce, “There are no hopeless situations; there are only people who have grown hopeless about them.” Luce gives a valuable truth that church leaders and churches themselves must believe in order to move towards restoration. Gary McIntosh in his book, *There is Hope for Your Church* believes that many church leaders and lay members that engage in church life today lack hope. He argues that this crippling thought comes from resistance, barriers, and circumstances. Many years of trying, struggling, and failing have caused many members to become discouraged. McIntosh goes on to say that many local churches start with good intentions that are some how lost among the fray. Jerry Pence in his blog, “Church The Way It Ought To Be,” says, “When patterns of complacency and compromise emerge, slow death goes to work with symptomless deception.”¹

In the first chapter of McIntosh’s book, he researches some startling statistics on church decline and plateauing. He states, “Roughly three-fourths of established churches in North America are either declining or on a long-term plateau. He also says, that such churches are ineffective at making disciples.

After twenty years of pastoring in African American Baptist churches, experience shows that there is little to no evangelism going on in the church because of internal

¹Jerry Pence, “Church the Way it Ought to Be,” *Mandate* (Winter 2003): 3.

circumstances that caused plateauing or decline. Some of the internal circumstances include moral failure, doctrinal divisions, personality cults, and divisive fellowship.

McIntosh in the first chapter of his book admonishes his readers to see the potential in church growth by doing three things. McIntosh's initial approach to this debacle in church health is to have hope, because God wants your church to grow. He points out one of the first moments in the Bible that reveals God's intentions for church growth: "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Mt 16:18). McIntosh argues the concept of church in this passage contains the seeds of both the universal church and local churches. He also points out the growing number of Christians that are prevalent today to further prove his point that, as local churches grow, the universal church grows. He says, according to the scripture, not even Hades shall stop the advancement of the church.² This writer believes that while McIntosh makes a great point in reflecting the local churches contributions to the universal church, attention should also be given to Jesus' own part in restoration. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says, "Upon this rock I will build My Church." In the statement, Jesus was proclaiming His own part in restoration. In John chapter one it says, "In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." In the twelfth verse it records, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God. Which were born not of blood, not the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God. Verse 14, and the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.

²Gary L. McIntosh, *There's Hope for Your Church* (Grand Rapids: MI Baker Books, 2012), 21.

McIntosh continues to encourage hope in his exposition on the biblical command of “be fruitful and multiply.” He states that this statement has implications of expectation for numerical growth of new disciples and churches. McIntosh uses Genesis and Exodus to prove his point by tying the command of God to Noah in Genesis 9:1 to fill the earth and the fulfillment found in Exodus: 1, when it states, “But the sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them” (Ex 1:7). Their obedience was tied directly to their deliverance.

Secondly, McIntosh says, “God revitalizes and restores people, nations, and churches that have lost spiritual energy.” In order to prove his point, he talks about the accounts in the Old Testament of cycles of rebellion, repentance, and restoration in the book of Judges. McIntosh makes the point of saying every time the nation rebelled and repented, God raise up a new leader called a judge who brought restoration to the nation. The implications that are being made are that God will restore churches that will hear and repent. Revelation further supports McIntosh’s idea when it says, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches, (Rev. 2:7).

Thirdly, McIntosh says, God is revitalizing churches right now. In this point, McIntosh gives his own account of churches throughout the United States and Canada that he has observed being revitalized. From personal experience, God uses pastoral ministry to revitalize congregations from the throws of decline to the mountain of vitality. One such way is by adding youth curriculum on Bible study nights, advertising in the neighborhood and adding a youth service on first and third Sundays of every month.

As we continue to look at the restoration of the church today, we must consider the views of Jeff Iorg in his book, *The Case for Antioch*. Iorg says, “The story of the

church at Antioch is an inspiring drama, a model of a transformative church in the first century for the church in the twenty-first century.”³

In his book, he talks about using the New Testament church (Early Church). Iorg points out the importance of the context in the life of the church. He outlines the New Testament church and from its plight gleans restorative truths that have worked to bring the small early church into exponential growth. According to Iorg the world population is moving to cities, and future kingdom growth must be fueled by city based churches and church planting movements.⁴ Iorg goes on to say that in 2008 the worldwide population in urban areas exceeded the rural areas for the first time in human history. He also predicts that by 2030, more than five billion people will live in the cities of the world. These population trends mandate that future church be effective in world cities.

Iorg brings to mind provocative points concerning church flight in earlier years. Persons would have to drive from the city. Iorg speaks on this thought when he states that church flight has occurred because modern cities have been perceived as outposts of concentrated evil to be avoided by Christians. He further states that flight has come because cities have become inhospitable to church forms and functions.

In the book *Total Forgiveness*, R.T. Kendall discusses the need for forgiveness in the people of faith. He finds that true forgiveness can only be achieved when a person has totally forgiven. Kendall defines three different degrees of forgiveness that he has chosen from Michele Nelson.

³Jeff Iorg, *The Case For Antioch: A Biblical Model for a Transformative Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 13.

⁴Ibid.

1. Detached Forgiveness – there is a reduction in negative feelings toward the offender, but no reconciliation takes place.
2. Limited Forgiveness- there is a reduction in negative feelings toward the offender, and the relationship is partially restored, though there is a decrease in the emotional intensity of the relationship.
3. Full forgiveness-there is a total cessation of negative feelings toward the offender, and the relationship is fully restored.

Kendall suggest that those who have not forgiven one another are spiritual inapt to serve in the community of faith. He lists each of these degrees to allow the writer to be informed on the different nuances of forgiveness that individuals experience when they have been offended. Kendall states that his work is “wholly about biblical teaching—about the spiritual blessing that comes to those who take Jesus’s teaching of total forgiveness seriously. In a word, it is about receiving a greater anointing.”⁵ Kendall points out the importance of forgiveness is not about freeing the one who offended you but, it is for a greater anointing on the believer life.

According to Kendall unforgiveness that is not confessed will grow into bitterness. He argues that bitterness in an individual’s heart gives Satan an invitation into our lives. “Satan knows what we know. He hangs around day and night waiting to exploit any weakness he can find in us. The single greatest weakness he loves to see is our inability to forgive. It was in the context of offering forgiveness that Paul said he was not ignorant of Satan’s ways (see 2 Cor 2; 11).

Satan can take advantage of us through our bitterness or refusal to let something drop and our insistence on dwelling on it. It is crucial that we get rid of our hearts

⁵R. T. Kendall, *Total Forgiveness* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2007), 6.

bitterness lest we hand the devil an invitation on a silver platter to enter our lives.”⁶

Kendall’s work on forgiveness has a different view on the understanding of how an unforgiven person should seek to reconcile their issues of unforgiveness. He holds the view that all individuals who have issues of unforgiveness should consider how Christ has forgiven them. “How has the Lord forgiven me; unequivocally and unconditionally. My sins, which are many, will never be held against me, and nobody will even know what I did. “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us” (Ps 103:12). It therefore follows that I should not hold people responsible for what they have done to me. I will hold nothing against them, and I will not tell other people, not even my closest friends, what they did to me.”⁷ Kendall states that there is a mandate given to man by God regarding forgiveness. He uses Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13 as scriptural support.

Forgiveness is necessary for the healing of the hurts of not only those who are governed by the Bible, but forgiveness is arguably needed throughout the world. Kendall explains the overall benefit that total forgiveness would have on humanity as a hold if it were embraced by “the various races, nationalities, and ethnic groups who are creating chaos and fomenting warfare with their enemies could be brought to forgive-to forgive totally-themselves, their tragic histories, the injustices that they have suffered in the past, and the hatreds that have hardened into virtual idolatries we could be on our way to a more peaceful world.”⁸

⁶Ibid.,138.

⁷Ibid., 20.

⁸Ibid., 26.

The need for the study and the practice of forgiveness in the world we live in today is examined in *The Dimensions of Forgiveness Psychological and Theological Research*. *Dimensions of Forgiveness* is a scholarly work that was birthed out of a meeting of scientific scholars hosted by the John Templeton Foundation. The conference invited the scholars to engage in a study on forgiveness. Edited by Everett L. Worthington Jr., *Dimensions of Forgiveness* states that the need for forgiveness is evident, “throughout the world, hostility among people and perpetration of evil continues, and the need for forgiveness for political abuse is high. In the United States, violence seems to continue to rises as well. And in our homes, the conflict and hurtfulness between partners that often occur before the dissolution of a marriage at current rates, almost half of the couples who marry can expect to divorce argue for increased knowledge about how to repair such personal damage, for ourselves and for the most vulnerable victims, or children.”⁹

In *Forgive and Forget* by Smedes, he says, “We attach our feelings to the moment when we were hurt, endowing it with immortality. And we let it assault us every time it comes to mind. It travels with us, sleeps with us, hovers over us while we make love, and broods over us while we die. Our hate does not even have the decency to die when those we hate die—for it is a parasite sucking our blood, not theirs.”¹⁰ According to Smedes, forgiving and forgetting cannot happen together. It is not possible for an individual to forgive an act that he/she has forgotten. “When we forgive someone, we do not forget the hurtful act, as if forgetting came along with the forgiveness package, the way strings

⁹Everett L. Worthington, Jr. *Dimensions of Forgiveness* (Philadelphia, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 1009).

¹⁰Lewis B. Smedes, *Forgive and Forget* (New York, NY: HarperOne Publishing, 2007).

come with a violin. If you forget, you will not forgive at all. You can never forgive people for things you have forgotten about. You need to forgive precisely because you have not forgotten what someone did; your memory keeps the pain alive long after the actual hurt has stopped. Remembering is your storage of pain. It is why you need to be healed in the first place. There are two kinds of pain that we forget. We forget hurts too trivial to bother about. We forget pains too horrible for our memory to manage.”¹¹

Smedes discussion on forgiveness looks at what forgiveness is not. Smedes states that there is ‘Some Nice Things Forgiving Is Not;’ in this chapter he lays out several things that are not required to take place in order to forgive. Smedes points out that forgiveness is not excusing the wrong that has been done. Those who smother people’s differences is not fostering forgiveness, but robbing individuals of the chance to forgive. Smede informs us that forgiving people by accepting their wrong deeds is not forgiveness.

In *The Art of Forgiving*, Smedes continues his studies on forgiveness by writing to give those who need to forgive practical ways to apply the art of forgiving. Smede list several areas that individual who desire to exercise the art of forgiving need to gain greater understanding.

- What makes it work
- Why we do it
- What to forgive and what not to forgive
- How to know when the time is ripe
- Whether to resume a relationship again after forgiving
- Whether to tell the person we forgive that we’ve done it

¹¹Ibid., 39.

- How to know whether we have actually done it, and above all
- How to do it right

Smedes' belief is that forgiving and reunion is not the same thing. He is opposed to the view that when one forgives he/she must go back to the way the relationship was before the incident to place. Smede view is opposite the popular views on forgiveness being the fully exercised when the parties are able to engage as before. Smede clearly holds that forgiving does not obligate us to go back.¹²

There are three reasons that are given by Smedes that those who have forgiven cannot go back to the relationship as it was before the wrong was done against them. The reunion is impossible sometimes because; circumstances can develop that hinder the individuals from reuniting. The practices of the one who has offended us may still be present. When the offender is being abused, attacked or afflicted by the offender reuniting is impossible; until the offender has been delivered from their evil habits. According to Smedes "Forgiveness is completed in the mind of person who forgives. When we forgive we see the person who wounded us as a fellow human being worthy of our love, and in that sense we reconcile ourselves to him."¹³ But being reconciled to him as a human being and embracing him as a partner are two different things, and we should keep them apart. If we have forgiven, we have removed one obstacle to reunion-the wall of our own bitterness. Whether we heal the relationship depends pretty much on the

¹²Lewis B. Smedes, *The Art of Forgiving* (New York, NY: Random House Publishing), 28.

¹³Ibid.

forgiven person.”¹⁴ Smede explains how forgiveness is for our own sakes. He discusses in chapter nine how forgiveness does have selfish motives connected to it. The wounds that were afflicted being able to heal benefit the one who forgives. “Forgiving has to heal our pain before it can heal anybody else’s pain.”¹⁵ The painful side of unforgiveness leaves the one who has been offended with two levels of pain: “the original pain of being wronged and the reactive pain we call hate or resentment.”¹⁶ The difficult issues that develop when one is challenged with a need to forgive are forgiving those who are not repentant. Smedes explains that despite the difficulty that comes with forgiving those who are not sorry. We must not allow the offender the opportunity to hinder our healing do to their stubbornness, timeliness and, life challenges.¹⁷

¹⁴Ibid., 29.

¹⁵Ibid., 73.

¹⁶Ibid., 72.

¹⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER THREE

FOUNDATIONS

Biblical Foundation

Few would argue that restoration is a Bible-based concept. According to Morris, restoration, the Greek noun *apokatastasis* is found only in Acts 3:21, while the corresponding verb is used three times in the sense of a final restoration. The idea goes back to the great prophets of the Old Testament. They foresaw the Exile, but they also prophesied that God would restore his people to their own land (Jer 27:22; Dn 9:25, *etc.*). When this took place, conditions in Judah were far from ideal, and thus men looked and longed for a further restoration, a restoration of prosperity and bliss.¹ This writer is inclined to agree with Morris on the idea of restoration to the people and the land. When viewing restoration, the Davidic Throne was also lost as mentioned in Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer 30:1, KJV).

The people would be restored back into right relationship with God through a king. This is a look at God's restoration on man, namely the children of Israel. The prophecy of restoration creates a great model for those living in the year 2013. Throughout history things have been worn by time. Webster defines the word restore as

¹L. L. Morris, "Restoration" in D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 1009.

to bring back to its former condition.² There have been many things in life needing or have been restored. Restoration plays a vital role in the life of anyone's desire to continue to function in the capacity for which they were made. Take for instance, if you own a house that has been dilapidated and you to still use it for what it was intended, a place to dwell. The first thing one would need to do is consider having it restored. One way to have it restored would be to get the blueprint and follow the architects design or plans. Martin Buber writes, "When God created man, he set the mark of his image upon man's brow and embedded it in man's nature, and that, however faint God's mark may become, it can never be entirely wiped out."

According to Hasidic legend, when the Baal-Shem conjured up the demon Sammael, he showed him this mark on the forehead of his disciples, and when the master bade the conquered demon be gone, the latter prayed, "Sons of the living God, permit me to remain a little while to look at the mark of the image of God on your faces." God's real commandment to man is to realize this image.³ His commandment to man, and the hope of man, is the realization of his original nature, according to unification theology; and notwithstanding error, frustration and failure, God has worked since the Fall to restore this promise.

Genesis gives the reader great understanding as to the history of restoration. In this book, we have the account of the first fall of man through the origin of man who is Adam. Man went against the commandment of God and cause judgment for the act of disobedience. This sin act forever changed man's identity from God's communal design. Because of the act of sin, man lost something that day. History proves that he lost the

²Ibid., 754.

³W. Herberg, ed., *The Writings of Martin Buber* (New York, NY: Meridian Books, 1956), 269.

image of God. Genesis 1:27 say, “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” (Gn 1:26, KJV). The very act of disobedience altered mans look, because God is not disobedient, not even to his word. We see though out scripture the under girding nature, of restoration from the Old to the New testaments. In these accounts we can see restorations plight though biblical history. In this historical journey to restoration, we shall we shall encounter: The Creation of Man, The Fall of Man, The Flood, Abraham Patriarchs, Judges, Kings, Prophets all the way to the New Testament.

Gods Design

In my efforts to give the reader a clear view of God’s design, our initial view must be God. We can clearly see in scripture the design God had in mind when he created man. He used himself as the blueprint. God was the standard; therefore it makes him the necessity in man’s restoration. Vincent supports my thought in his word studies of the New Testament. He says, “A statement of the absolute nature of God. Not *a* light, nor *the* light, with reference to created beings, as *the light of men, the light of the world*, but simply and absolutely *God is light*, in His very nature.”⁴ “The term *light* in the domain of the creature, whether with a physical or metaphysical meaning, is only an effluence of that one and only primitive *light* which appears in the nature of God.”⁵

⁴M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 313.

⁵*Ibid.*, 313.

Heavenly Blue Print

God in Genesis chapter one verse twenty-six says, “Let Us make man in our own image.” This writer believes this is the standard by which success is measured. God is the standard for man’s moral life and anything that has been worn out needs to be restored. If there is anyone that has viewed God’s standard and realize that we are mere filthy rags, having been weighed in the balance and have come up wanting, is in need of restoration because it was Gods intention that we be like Him. Somewhere between Genesis chapter One and John chapter three, man’s disobedience and sin has altered him from God’s blueprint of perfection. This disobedience is also found in (Gn 3:6, KJV) when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. Wiersbe proves this point when he argues the curses that came from covenant agreement, He says, “These are literal curses, and they later fell upon Israel because she broke her covenant with God by worshiping idols and disobeying His Law.”⁶ This caused man to be forever altered from God’s plan of perfection. Because of the corruption of sin, God’s word was forced to condemn man to death as a result of his disobedience. This was the very statement quoted by Eve in her conversation with the serpent. (Gn 3:3, KJV). The root of the word restoration is restore. Soans and Stevenson define the word restore to mean, “to bring back (a previous right, practice, or situation).”⁷ It means to repair. The very need of restoration reveals something about the person and the place needing restoration.⁸ It reveals change in the condition of the person. The

⁶W. W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), Dt 28:15–29:29.

⁷Catherine Soanes, Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 14.

⁸Ibid.

condition has been altered in such a manner that it is not benefitting from the connection to the Lord.

Adam's Family

In Genesis chapter three, Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden (Gn 3:6, KJV). When this happened, God did not kill them, he gave them consequences for their sin (Gn 3:15, KJV). Someone would have to pay the price. Blood must be shed. Life must be given in order for man to be restored to his original state (an eternal Being). This point is supported by the biblical account of God's covering of Adam and Eve. Despite the consequence, God also gave man hope in judging the serpent when he said, "He shall bruise your head." Hughes writes in his book, "Today both creation and the children of God groan as with birth pangs for the dawning of a new day" (cf. Gn 3:15, 16). And this groaning paradoxically confirms the hope of God's children.

Final and full liberation for Adam and the earth will come in Christ at the end of the age.⁹ Hughes makes a valid proclamation of God's judgments and grace that is extended to Adam and all mankind. God made man to be an eternal being and when man fell in sin, he altered God's plan for man to live like him in his image. God's law must be put into effect to judge man. Justice cried out for penalty to be carried out against man for the law that had been broken. Pink in his book, *Gleaning in Genesis* sheds light on this thought when he says, "Before the Fall, God had defined the wages of sin: In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely *die*."¹⁰ The consequences for sin come at a huge price. First, enmity is put between woman and Satan. Pink speaks on this point when he

⁹R. K. Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing: Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 93.

¹⁰A. W. Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005), 44.

says, “The woman here typifies *Israel*—the woman from whom the promised seed came.”¹¹ We see this hostility throughout the Bible with the attack on Israel by Satan and his demon. The first attack was the famine found in Genesis, The edict of pharaoh to destroy the male children, the Egyptian attack at the Red Sea, and the assault of the Canaanites after they had entered the Promised Land. It is this writer’s belief that God’s desire after the fall was not to leave man in the altered state that he was in, but to reconcile him through his son Jesus with grace on the cross. We see this in the action of God to cover them in their nakedness after the violation of his commandments. Hughes describes God’s act of restoration given by God as His mitigating graces, he states, “Now God performed an act of mitigating grace: And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them” (v. 21).¹² Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves, but it was unlike God’s covering. God’s covering required the taking of life in order to cover them. This action is also seen in the covering that Jesus would provide to bring the people in right relationship with God. God’s people would have the Sacrificial Lamb given to cover the sins of man. In this act of covering, the Lamb of God would have to give his life.

Abraham

The new covenant with Abraham was to be a renewing covenant that would bring the people back into relationship with God. Pink writes in his book *Gleanings in Genesis*, “The God of glory *appeared* unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia.” This is the first recorded appearing of God after the banishment of our parents from

¹¹Ibid., 42.

¹²Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing*, 94.

Eden.¹³ This also denotes Gods intentions to restore his people back to right relationship with him.

Abram is asked to separate himself from his kindred and acquaintances and go to a land that God would show him. Pink shares with his readers that Abram's obedience, typifies the one whose citizenship is in heaven but who is still in the world, and in consequence, called upon to walk by faith and live as a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. In a word, Abram illustrates *the heavenly calling* of those who are members of the body of Christ¹⁴ There is agreement with Pink's observation and would add to his thought by saying, the command from God to Abraham was a long walk towards obedience. God was not asking Abraham for momentary commitment to this obedience, but his continuous commitment to God's plan for his life. This obedience is recorded in Hebrew 11:8, "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place, he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going." This writer believes obedience always leads to blessing.

New Testament Restoration

In Matthew 16:18 Jesus says, "Upon this rock I will build My Church," in this statement, Jesus was proclaiming his own part in restoration. In John, chapter one it says, "In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God." In the twelfth verse it records, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God. Which were born not of blood, not the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God. Verse 14, and the word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and

¹³Pink, *Gleanings in Genesis*, 138.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 140.

we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.” He would bring back the word, the way, and the wisdom through restoration. In Acts of the Apostles Peter brings convicting accusations against the Jews that were so compelling they were cut to the heart and ask what should they do, and he said repent. Peter’s choice of words confirms the words of John. Later we will see what place confirmation has in restoration. The response and command of Peter was met with sincere obedience on the part of the Jews at that time. This belief of the foundation Jesus would grant them the forgiveness of sin (this would put them back into right relationship with the father), and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-38, KJV). The covenant agreement would allow the people to be released from ungodly worship, ungodly practices, and ungodly relationship with one another.

Christian Name

Biblical Christianity was originally a sect of Judaism that believed in Jesus and revered the Torah as the core of her scriptures. These believing Jews would become known as the early church and grew into a name change in Antioch. The verse records, “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26, KJV).

Going Back

Restoration is a manner of going back in order to go forward. To be restored is to be renewed, revived, and reborn. in John’s gospel Jesus in the third chapter and the seventh verse says, “Ye must be born again” (Jn 3:7, KJV). This statement of Jesus indicates a need to be reborn or regenerated back to the heavenly blueprint. This writer believes the way back to right relationship with God is through the word of God. In

taking a journey back through the scripture, this writer finds it ironic that in order to stay connected to God, we have to Go back and read the scripture that has already been written.

In Acts 1:8 we see what they had to do in order to be restored in the New Testament. It says, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you and ye shall be witness unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8, KJV). They had the Holy Ghost, they had power and they were witnesses of His favor. They also gained faith over fear in (Acts 5:29, KJV) when they told the Sanhedrin counsel it’s better for us to obey God rather than man. In Numbers chapter fourteen and verse three we have the lost of confidence, trust, land, and relationship; but fear is gained.

The Children of Israel stated, “And wherefore hath the Lord brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, and that our wives and children should be prey? Were it not better for us to return into Egypt” (Nm 14:3, KJV). The question of confidence comes in the statement, “Wherefore has the Lord brought us unto this Land.” They are not confident God has lead them in the right direction. The lack of trust is found in the next breath when they say, “to fall by the sword” (vs. 3). They sound like God has set them up to die. They are not trusting God to protect them.

The final thing the children of Israel lost was faith. In the last part of verse three there is a thought to go back to Egypt for fear of the fight ahead. Restoration is a process of going back to the old way or old path according to scripture. Joshua 1:8 helps us to understand this belief by saying, “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth but thou shalt meditate therein day and night that thou mayest observe to do according to

all that is written there in, for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.” It is the returning to God’s way of being that restores success.

Restorations suggest going back in order to go forward. In bringing the message of restoration, this writer will identify certain parts of the modern-day church that is in need of restoration. The individual parishioner in the church needs restoration. The congregation as a whole needs restoration. The leadership of the church needs restoration. The land or the community that surrounds the church needs restoration. The nation needs restoration.

The Great Commission given by Jesus Christ to go to the uttermost parts of the world further supports this point (Mt 28:19-20, KJV). Wright in his book, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* writes, “Jesus was launched by a revival movement for the restoration of Israel.”¹⁵ He further states that he launched the movement of the blessings of the nations. This writer believes it was the plan of Christ to bear the burden of the Cross—to save man, and by doing so brings completion to the reconciliation of God and his people. It is evident by the words of Jesus Christ when he died on the Cross. There is a real need for right relationship with God that calls His favor to be in the life of every believer. (According to Wright three months after the Exodus, God at last has Israel to himself at the foot of Mount Sinai.) It is at this very place God through Moses gave them his law including the Ten Commandments and entered into a covenant with them as a nation. Wright further states, “He will be their God and they would be his people, and in

¹⁵J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* (Westmont, IL: IVP, 1995), 166.

a relationship of sovereignty and blessing on the one hand and loyalty and obedience on the other.”¹⁶

Covenant Agreement

William suggests that it is important to see that this covenant was based on what God had already done for them as seen in Exodus 19, four through six. He goes on to say their obedience to God and their covenant agreement through obedience was to be a grateful response and this would enable them to be what God wanted them to be; His people in the midst of nations.

Restoration is a visible part of the life of the children of Israel found in the prophecy of Jeremiah. In chapters 30 through 33 reveals the certainty of restoration in the lives of the children of Israel. Because of their disloyalty and disobedience to God, the children of Israel's condition changed from favorable to unfavorable. They were in need of restoration. Jeremiah prophesies about a time when God would bring restoration to His people. Jeremiah prophesied restoration of land, prosperity, and the restoration of the Davidic throne.¹⁷ Jeremiah Chapter 30 says, “The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah In verse three, the Lord said that he will bring captivity upon Israel and Judah.” In the same breath, he condemns them to captivity and connects their pardon to return to the land of their fathers.

In Ezekiel and Ezra we can see God's restoration in the lives of His children being quicken through His renewing and restoring through his divine presence. In both

¹⁶Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁷Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary.

chapters, we find not only the restoration of spiritual but also physical needs. God's design for our lives is perfect and the people of God altered God's design through sin. As seen in Genesis 3, man fell from God's grace and altered God's heavenly blueprint. Through God's restoration, people were put in a place of favor. The people would get the land, prosperity and the throne. It indicates the motive of God's restoration is wholeness. In the Book of Ezra chapter one, the scripture reads, "In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and put it in writing that the Lord had given him a decree to restore the house of Judah in Jerusalem. The prophesy of Jeremiah is referenced in verse one of chapter one. The favor of God was now visible in the lives of His children.

Restoration of the Land

In verse three of Ezra chapter one, the proclamation of the return to the land is given by King Cyrus of Persia, he saith, "Who is there among you all his people his God be with him and let him go up to Jerusalem." The restoration of the land meant the people's prosperity would be supported by the king's command, indicating that the people who were to help them were under arrest by the decree of the king. They would also receive favor because of returning to the land. They would also receive a free will offering. This further illustrates what Malachi talk about in the third chapter and tenth verse when he states, "God will pour you out blessings that you want have room to receive" (Mal 3:10, KJV). Scott in his book, *God Plan Unfolding* says, "When men arrive they gave willingly of their wealth to the restoration of the temple. They would not just be getting by, but they would have enough to help others. Because of the return of the

land, the people of God would receive gifts to go back home. They received help to return from Babylon to Jerusalem (Ez 1:4,KJV).¹⁸

Restoration of the People

Also, according to Ezra the people would be restored. They would receive according to decree, silver and gold, goods, and beast, and a free will offering. The first people we see restored are the head or leadership. In verse five of Ezra chapter one it says, “Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit of God had raised, to go and build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem” (Ez 5, KJV). The purpose in working in Gods Kingdom comes back to the people. According to Ezra the hand of the people were strengthen. They were not slaves but a free people.

Restoration of the Davidic Throne

Ezra records in verse seven of chapter one that the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the Lord, which had been stolen by King Nebuchadnezzar. The church restored with silver and gold and vessels numbering in the thousands. Once the children got back to the land, they would restore the Holy City, the place where the symbol for the Throne of God resided. People would go back to worship and renew their relationship with God. In chapter there, the people restored worship in the temple. In verse 2 the scripture records, “Then stood up Joshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priest, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren and built the altar of the God of

¹⁸Jack B. Scott, *Gods Plan Unfolded* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishing, 1978), 240.

Israel” (Ez 3:2, KJV). They restored the worship to God’s Kingdom, the very covenant basis upon the Davidic agreement that a king shall lead them back to God. King Cyrus of Persia leads the people in being restored unto the Lord.

Biblical Model

In this writers journey to find a biblical model of restoration in relationship to God and His people, we must visit the book of Haggai. Haggai’s message is a message of restoration enveloped in the word rebuild. William writes, “Haggai knew that its restoration was essential as the outward sign of the covenant, and of the Lord’s presence with his people.”¹⁹ When Haggai preaches his message, the leadership is the first to respond to the mindset of rebuilding. The pastor of Blooming Lighthouse ministries was the first one in the church to receive the need for restoration. In this writer’s observation, it was not an easy thing for the pastor to understand. It took the unmasking of the illusion of having a great relationship to discovery that it was not good at all. For example, the pastor devoted more time to various circumstances in life and did not give much attention to the word and prayer unto God.

This writer feels without this vital element of having God’s Word consistently present in there lives, the child of God lost their relationship with God, therefore, they had no power over their circumstances. Haggai writes, “In the second year of King Darius, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the Lord came through the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of

¹⁹Peter Williams, *Opening Up Haggai* (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2008), 9.

Jehozadak, the high priest” (Hg 1:1, KJV). The expression ‘the word of the Lord’ appears for the first time in the Bible in connection with Abraham in Genesis 15:1. “After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision.” Thereafter it occurs again and again in the scriptures, especially in the prophetic books. It is an expression that reminds us of the great privilege that is ours, when we are able so hear the word. William further writes, “There are still many parts of the world where people have not yet had the privilege and blessing of receiving God’s word, whereas in the Western world, we can hear it openly in preaching, through reading the Bible and Christian books, through audio and video recordings, and through services of worship on the radio and TV.”²⁰

According to the Psalmist, there is nothing in all creation to equal the privilege of having the eternal God communicate with us through his word. “For you have exalted above all things your name and your word” (Ps 138:2). William asked the question, “But if that is so, why is it that so many people in the Western world today treat God’s word with total indifference and turn a deaf ear when it is preached?”²¹ It is this writer’s belief that people in the western world have too many other things that receive their attention. It is sad that the same community do not have a problem giving their time talent and substance to the viewing, listening, and attending to one’s priorities to that of the world.

The word of the Lord takes us back to a place when God’s children prospered through God’s favor. The prophet Amos makes a point, which supports this idea. “The days are coming, declares the Sovereign Lord, when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord” (Am 8:11, KJV).

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

Williams writes, “We do not suffer from a famine of the word of God today, since we have the complete revelation of divine truth in the Bible. But there is certainly a famine of people hearing the word of the Lord.”²² Haggai begins his book with an important revelation concerning the word of God. Haggai mentions that it was the word of God that came to him.

This is important in modern-day times and in the life of the members of the Blooming Light Ministries because people are missing the authentic word of God in their lives. This writer believes that another challenge for the members of the Blooming Light House church is not many are receiving God’s Word from God, rather they are receiving a word from man. The expression, the word of the Lord appears for the first time in the Bible in connection with Abraham in Genesis 15:1 — “After this, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision.

When the children of Israel were in the valley of dry bones cut off from their God, it was Ezekiel who was still on speaking terms with God. “The hand of the Lord was on me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.”²³ It was this connection to God through His word that enables restoration for Gods people. If the child of God is going to restore the crooked places to be made straight, man must have his word.

William makes this point when he says, “After exploring the desire of restoration of God back to his people, we must turn our teaching to the methods used in Haggai to get the people to rebuild God's temple. Haggai brought a Holy Ghost filled convicting

²²Ibid.

²³Ez 37:1.

message to move the people to accept the restoration of rebuilding the temple. This message suggests that the people of God have a responsibility in their own restoration. The responsibility that is mentioned in Haggai is to return and rebuild the temple. The people in Haggai's time put rebuilding on the back burner. They were more concerned with their own prosperity. Williams records, "Their glorious city was in ruins, its walls heaps of rubble, and its beautiful temple a pile of blackened stones. But under their leaders, Zerubbabel and Joshua, the people—with enthusiasm and purpose—began the work of rebuilding the temple, but had succeeded only in laying the foundation when the work was stopped by command of the Persian king, Artaxerxes I."²⁴

The book of Ezra records in the fourth chapter,²⁴ "Thus the work on the house of God in Jerusalem came to a standstill until the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia."²⁵ The work on the Temple had ceased. The people began to reply to Haggai's message saying it was not the right time. In light of opposition, Haggai points out what they did have had time for. They were operating their lives by their own agenda. Haggai tells them to consider their ways. He says, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink: ye clothe you, but there is none warm: and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Hg 1:6, KJV).

This type of living was causing them to make poor investments that always left them in the red. They became comfortable worshipping among ruins. It has been this writer's observation that the people of God did not altogether just quit serving God, it

²⁴Williams, *Opening up Haggai*, 11.

²⁵ Ez 4:24.

happen in a subtle way, they gradually stop serving the Lord and begun to be so caught up in their own lives that they served themselves without having time for God. This writer is not suggesting that the word of God is not being preached in the presence of the congregation of Blooming Light House Ministries, but what is being sent is not being received as God's word. The word is being preached but it is falling on stony ground instead of good soil. The fault comes from the ground not receiving the seed. The word of God is gradually being choked out by modern-day circumstances that the individual parishioners are dealing with. Whatever their circumstance maybe.

It Needs to Be Personal

It is this writers belief that, "People need to be personally convicted by the word of God." It has been this writer's experience that evidence of personal conviction occurs when members say, "I felt as though the word was speaking to me today." This point is further supported when Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman by the well; she was convicted by the word of God and told her testimony to others. But when modern-day circumstances overtake the life of the individual parishioner on a personal level, it is offensive and they become indignant and nonresponsive because they have not received the word of God.

Historical Foundation

The word restoration has its place in the history of Christianity. Looking at the African American Baptist church, the restoration movement also known as the American Restoration Movement or the Stone-Campbell Movement began on the American frontier during the Second Great Awakening (1790-1870) of the early 19th Century. This

movement restored the church and unified the body of Christ. These Christians patterned themselves after New Testament Church. During this era, there were two types of believers; one called Christians and the other called Disciples of Christ. Christians initially were separated, and in 1832 through the good faith of a handshake they united under common beliefs in Jesus as Christ, and the Son of God.²⁶ Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper on the first day of each week and also believe in the baptism of adult believers by immersion in water as a necessary condition for salvation. In efforts to band all denominational ties, they use biblical names for their followers. According to history, the restoration movement in the Christian church has once again divided into multiple groups. The main ones are The Church of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Ecumenism

Briggs records in the history of the Ecumenical Movement, the motive for the separation. The Christian breakup stemmed from differences in the goals of restoration and ecumenism. This same idea is made visible in the Acts of the Apostles when Peter went to Cornelius' house and confirmed the presence of God among the Gentiles, thus crossing religious barriers set by traditional practices in Jewish law. In Acts 10:42 Peter preached the word and the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard. This particular event caused much debate and separation among the Early church Christians. In chapter eleven verse two, the word says that when those of the circumcision heard that the Gentiles had received the Word of God they contended with Peter. The circumcised Jews did not

²⁶Lester G. McAlister, and William E. Tucker, *Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church* (Disciples of Christ) (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1975), 35.

believe that God was sent to save the world, only them, and they were appalled that Peter had fellowship with non-Jews.

The term ecumenism is a derivative of the Greek word *oikoumene*, which means the whole inhabited world. Walter Kasper shed light on this term in his article, “The Call to Unity Today.” Kasper refers to ecumenism as the idea of Christian unity in the literal meaning, which states that there should be one Christian Church not one clouded by nondenominational Christianity. The vision of ecumenism seeks indication of unity not only in the church but also in whole earth as testified by the word of God in Matthew 24:14, “And the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” This idea embraces a global perspective and philosophy.

Restoration

The belief of restoration for Christians or Christian primitivism is also described as restorationism. This is the belief that Christianity should be restored according to the apostolic early church. The goal of more recent groups of restorationist is to reestablish Christianity in its original form of anti denominational charismatic restorationists. This school of thought by restorationist searches for a pure and more ancient form of religion.²⁷ Earlier primitivism movements include: Hussites, Anabaptist, Landmarkiest and Puritans. These groups have tried to implement there ideas of restoration in many ways, some have focused on structure and practice of the church, others have focused on the ethical life of the church, and others the direct experience of the Holy Spirit in the life

²⁷Allen D, Foster, Anthony L. Dunnivant, *The Encyclopedia of the Stone- Campbell Movement Christian Churches: Churches of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 635.

of the believer.²⁸ There have been several models of this restoration ideal; they are: Ecclesiastical Primitivism, Ethical Primitivism, Experiential Primitivism, and Gospel Primitivism.

Ecclesiastical Primitivism focuses on restoring the ecclesiastical practices of the early church. Huldrych Zwingli, and John Calvin and the Puritans all advocated this model.²⁹ Ethical primitivism focuses on restoring the ethical norms and commitment to discipleship of the early church. The Anabaptist, Barton W. Stone and the Holiness Movement are examples of this form of restorationism.³⁰ This movement requires observance of universal commandments, such as biblical Sabbath examples found in Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Experiential primitivism focuses on restoring the direct communication with God and the experience of the Holy Spirit as seen in the early church.³¹ Those who subscribe to the experiential primitivism are the Latter Day Saints movement of Joseph Smith, Jr. and Pentecostalism.³² The Gospel primitivism may be best seen in the theology of Martin Luther. Martin Luther was not a devote restorationist because he saw human effort to restore the church as works righteousness and was critical of other Reformation leaders who were attempting to do so.³³ Martin Luther was convinced that the gospel message had been blurred by the Roman Catholic Church of that time. He also rejected the traditions of the church and insisted on scripture as the sole

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid., 637.

³¹Ibid., 639.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid., 638.

authority for the church. There are no exclusive natures in these models because they have some evidences of overlapping.

The Second Great Awakening at Cane Ridge Kentucky helped advance the liberation of Black slaves and women's rights with the American Canadian society. Several African American Christians who were born into slavery went on to become popular figures in society marked as a central and defining moment in the development of Afro-Christianity. According to a study done by Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, the Restoration movement was significant among Blacks because it brought equality among other Evangelical Christians (Christian Disciples). Their belief was all men, including Blacks, are created equal under God according to the Holy Scriptures.

This idea was later adapted into the constitutional beliefs of Canada because of the political and anti slavery connotations. African Americans were welcome to preach in the pulpits of white evangelical Christians while white evangelical preachers ministered to mixed congregations. This was an unprecedented time in the life of the Christian church. The Christian church exercised its independence under God by becoming one of many restoration movements. In this time of shifting in theology, many Black women and men made great contribution to the Evangelical churches.

Evangelicals continued to exercise the liberty in God by their adoption of the ordination of women. Many women went on to become preachers and great leaders in the movement. In Black churches, women out number men in attendance and became the backbone of Black church life. In the rural geography, there are predominantly Black women. The Blooming Light Ministries history has been predominately women with men in leadership roles.

Today's Restoration Movement

The economist estimated in 2012 over one third of America, more than one million can be considered evangelical. There are arguments raised that the percentage of Evangelicals is undercounted because many Black Christians espoused evangelical theology, but do not use the name Evangelicals, but call themselves born again Christian.³⁴ Most African American belongs to Baptist, Methodist or denominations that share evangelical beliefs. They are firmly in the democratic coalition and accept gay and abortion, and are generally liberal in politics.³⁵ According to studies done on evangelical denominations, early followers of evangelicals (Christian disciples) in Canada who revolted traditional denominations in an effort to restore the original church according to the New Testament pattern.

Theological Foundation

Ever since the creation of the world, God's invisible nature namely, His eternal power and deity, have been clearly perceived in the things that have been made, so they are without excuse (Rom 1:20). This biblical theology presents exhaustive evidence to the existence of God. This existence can be argued through the finite nature of mankind and the infinite nature of God. In the beginning God created the heaven and earth. God is the creator of all things. Christian theology offers revelatory understanding on the existence of God.

According to Christian theology, the study of God's revelation of himself to

³⁴“Lift Every Voice, The Economist” May 5, 2012.

³⁵Kenneth J. Heineman, *God Is A Conservative: Religion, Politics and Morality in Contemporary Americans* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998), 71-12,173.

humanity has been classified in two ways: The General Revelation and Special Revelation. There are three areas for thought for general revelation: nature, history and humanity. General revelation is God revealing Himself to all people at all times and in all places. Special revelation reveals that God communicated with particular persons during particular times; this communication can now be found only in sacred scripture. The General Revelation of Loci presents some thoughts as well: nature, history and the constitution of human beings. Scriptures gives us some idea of Gods existence through created physical order.

The psalmists say, “The heavens are telling a story of God” (Ps 19:1). This evidence stands as a true testament to God’s existence in the world. This evidence also points to the only wise God who is capable of creating great beauty and variety. One can view the history of Gods nature among man in his hand down through history in (Jb 12:23; Ps 47:7-8; 66:7; Is 12:5-13; Dan 2:21, Acts 17:26). There have been varying contrasting and less impressive looks at the evidence that history gives as opposed to God’s Nature.

Erickson notes that one reason is due to the accessibility of historical documents. He reports that documents are not only hard to find but may be dependent on secondhand material. This will lend it self to seeing part of the picture and producing a skewed understand of the overall pattern or trend. One of the great examples of God’s work in his people is through the Children of Israel. This small nation of people overcame many impossible situations by the hand of God. The third locus of general revelation is the human. Some people have found evidence of God through the mental complexity and

physical characteristics of man. It is also believed by Christians that God's best properties are exemplified through man's moral and spiritual qualities.

Natural Theology

According to Erikson in his book *Christian Theology*, "Natural theology takes a sharp contrast to the nature, extent, and efficiency of general revelation."³⁶ Natural theology claims not only that there is a valid objective revelation of God in such spheres as nature, history and human personality, but also that it is actually possible to gain some true knowledge from these spheres. According to Erikson, this theology suggests a natural theology apart from the Word of God. There is an assumption that is mention in contrast to general theology; its objectivity, valid, and general revelations stand regardless of anyone's perception, understanding or belief. This theology suggest that God's creation means He is real without having to have some person say they got it from another source like the Bible.

The core of natural theology is the idea that it is possible, without a prior commitment of faith to the beliefs of Christianity, and without prior commitment of faith, the beliefs of Christianity and without relying on any special authority, such as a church or Bible to come to a genuine knowledge of God on the basis of reason alone.³⁷ One of the most influential people in the history of the Church was Thomas Aquinas. According to Aquinas, all truth belongs to one of two realms, the lower realm or the realm of nature, and the higher realm of grace. The upper realm must be accepted on authority, those in

³⁶Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 180.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 181.

the lower realm may be known by reason.³⁸ Aquinas contended that he could prove certain beliefs by pure reason: The existence of God, the immorality of the human soul, and the supernatural origin of the Catholic Church.

Man's Sin

In order to understand restoration we must take a look at man's sin, the object of the rejection of man from God. Man's sin and salvation deserve some attention as it has its place in restoration. Ireaneus, one of the fathers of church history points us to Matthew 23:37, in which he sadly laments over Jerusalem: "How often have I desire to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, you were not willing." Here, there is a belief by Ireaneus that we have been presented with the ancient law of human liberty. This carry's with it the connotation that from the beginning, man has been created with his own power to choose freely to obey or disobey God.³⁹ Ireaneus believed when man chooses to disobey God, they forfeit what is good with no small amount of inquiry and mischief; the sad result.⁴⁰ This writer believes with this forfeiture, man is perplexed and parlayed, needing to be saved and restored.

Ireaneus may be misinterpreted if put against the backdrop of the Pelagian controversy. He was concerned with Gnostic teachers who claimed that humanity's physical or material nature cripples a person's ability to respond to God in faith or good works. There is an attack by the Gnostics that question if creation is a good thing or not. Ireaneus defends the goodness of creation even after man had fallen. Ireaneus promotes

³⁸Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, part 1 question 2.

³⁹Ireneaeus *Adversus Haereses* 4.41.2, cited in *Encyclopedia of the Early Church*, ed. Angelo Di Berardina, trans. Adrian Walford (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1:320

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 125.

the goodness of God from making the healthy choice to do what is good. Irenaeus writes, “Things are not esteemed so highly which come spontaneously, as those which are reached by much anxious care.” Just as we appreciate healing after hurt, blessing after brokenness, so do those that have struggled and endured. Just as we delight in the delights of the flesh, so do we the more delight in our involvement in God’s Kingdom.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

The Blooming Lighthouse Ministry is confronting a dilemma experienced by many churches; how do they work together to fulfill the demand of the Great Commission. The local church faces a similar dilemma. A local church can grow by using any number of enhancements, for instance, by appealing to consumerism, creating a trendy atmosphere, reaching out to felt needs, not offending members, or by attempting to please all those who enter the door. These methods will only cultivate an unhealthy environment in the church ministries. The hypothesis for this project is when leaders and their congregation take a journey back to the way God intended relationships to be through his design, they will grow exponentially and will continue to endure through hardships by the joy of their salvation in worship. The field experience will take place at Blooming Lighthouse Church in the small town of Pelham, Georgia, located in Mitchell County. Pelham is a southwest Georgia community that was founded in 1881. It is currently home to approximately 3,898 people. The male and female population is nearly balanced with men representing 45.5% of the citizens and women representing 54.5%. The town is divided mainly into three ethnicities: African-American, Caucasian, and Hispanic. African-Americans number 2,339, representing roughly 60% of the population. There are 1,408 (36.1%) Caucasians and 110 (2.8%) Hispanics.

Like most rural areas in Georgia, Pelham's economy has historically centered on agriculture. With the progression of technology and improvements in farm machinery, much of Pelham's labor force was left to find jobs elsewhere. Many went to work in nearby factories and

other industrial jobs. Still the average income for individuals living in Pelham is \$23,493, well below the state of Georgia's average income for residents, which is \$47,590. In fact, statistics show that about 60% of Pelham's residents live below the poverty level. Of that percentage, approximately 16% live in severe poverty (below 50% of the poverty level). Many of these families are single mothers struggling to make out a living for them and their children. For more than a few, their options are severely limited due to lack of education. About 33% of Pelham's adults lack a high school diploma.

Despite the dire economic situation, residents of Pelham manifest a religious spirit. A sizable portion of the population professes an adherence to some particular faith. The overwhelming majority (nearly three-fourths of the church population), report that they adhere to the Southern Baptist faith. However, a significant portion, 56%, remain unchurched and have experienced unhealthy relationships.

To fully undertake this project, it will be necessary for the entire church to accept the tasking. It will also require engaging the congregants in an educational process that involves the practical application. This approach will not be a phase project but an ongoing operation of shadowing healthy relationships.

It is expected that there will be some hesitation in going through the process of opening up and dealing with sensitive issues that foster unhealthy relationship. In a truer sense of completing the project, the writer is aware that the conception period will be completed, but the results of the project will breathe into the future generations of the church. The process will be conducted through a qualitative action research using seminars, journaling and pre and post testing. The pre-test will measure the ministry understanding and knowledge on the subject of healthy relationships. Over an eight-week assessment period, participants will engage in a pre-

test, a five hour healthy relationship seminar, a three-week sermon series, a three week Bible study course, a healthy relationship practicum, and a post-test. This process will engage the participants in a dialogue and series of sermons and Bible studies designed to assess the spiritual aspects and understanding of their role in healthy relationships.

Because relationships are essential to church growth, each member must be taught to model the love that Christ has with the church in order to provide an adequate foundation for healthy relationships. Particular attention will be paid to any patterns, policies, and structures that inhabit the process of healthy relationships. The facilitator's role in the process is that of researcher and primary collector of data. He will also promote a positive environment through mediation and teaching understanding and familiarity of the context. Because his presence will also bring a certain bias into the environment, the active participation of the context associates in the study and project will assist to balance, mitigate, and temper said bias.

The data collection period will be August through September 2013. Data analysis will begin in October. Context associates will seek to identify patterns and concepts that will bring insight and life to the hypothesis. In order to check the validity of the data collected; multiple sources, surveys, questionnaires, observations, and peer group review (triangulation) will be used.

This project will subsequently be evaluated by its results. The designed outcome for this ministry project is that Blooming Lighthouse Ministries will become aware of the indicators of unhealthy relationships and be convicted to take steps to renew, revive, and restore the type of love shadowed by Jesus.

Course Agenda

Session One

Session one of the project will be of significant benefit to the members of Blooming Light House Ministries. A five-hour training workshop will assist the church reconnecting members and teaching the biblical foundations of healthy relationships. The workshop will begin with a pretest that will measure the knowledge and willingness of the congregants to take on the process of rebuilding their relationships with one another. Healthy relationship consultants will introduce various ways of healthy interactions and also the pitfalls that happen in taking on this endeavor. Handouts and note taking material will be given to each participant to encourage them to learn the fundamental language and process of healthy relationships. The workshop will cover scripture and strategies for building the body of Christ. A question and answer period is built into the workshop to allow the participants to have access to the consultants to answer any of their concerns in a one on one discussion.

Session Two and Three

Sessions two and three will run concurrently on Sunday morning and Wednesday evenings. The Sunday morning sermons will be exegetical teachings from the scripture that will cover biblical strategies and examples for healthy relationships. The sermons will assist the participants in understanding how they have been commanded to love every one as Christ have loved them (Jn 13:34-35, NIV).

The Wednesday evening Bible study will be an in-depth study of Sunday's text with forty- five minutes of open consideration of the text. This will enhance the biblical

understanding and foundation of Christ intentions for healthy relationships for the ministry. This method allows for free exchange of thought to ensure an understanding and connection between the members and the pastor. All sermon and Bible study sessions will have handouts and note-fill-in sheets to connect the participant into a deeper level of learning. The sermon series, is based on the following sermons and texts, (A) Going Back from Jeremiah 6:16A; (B) Getting Ready from 2 Chronicles 29: 6-9; and (C) Loving Like the Lord from John 13:34-35.

Session Four

Session four will be a practicum where the congregants will do role-play and model healthy relationships. The congregants will watch a movie that deals with healthy relationships. The role play does not suggest that they have all the tools it take to have a healthy relationship, but it will give them a visual of what healthy relationships look like. There will be mentors to guide the participant through their scenarios.

Session Five

Session five will be the administration of post-test and testimony of the participant's progress and understanding of the material presented during the eight-weeks. It will also give insight into the effect and influence the project has on the church and participants. The post-test will also determine what further areas need to be explored to strengthen the entire process of transition into healthy relationships. It is hoped that these strategies will become the tools needed to rebuild and restore healthy relationships within Blooming Lighthouse Ministries.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Project Implementation

In an effort to change the revolving door effect of members coming and going as a result of unhealthy relationships in the congregation, this writer and research team implemented a healthy relationship action research process. The goal of the action research was to promote healthy relationships among the members to strengthen their efforts to do evangelism and discipleship in the community. In order to test the hypothesis, the researcher used the qualitative research methodology.

On November 6, 2013, the researcher invited all members of Blooming Lighthouse Ministries to participate in an eight-week healthy relationship process that focused on personal development and improvement of fellowship among the membership. A healthy relationship workshop was held on that day. A sample of twenty (20) members attended the workshop. The participants were African American adults, male and female ages twenty-five to sixty and members of Blooming Lighthouse Ministries. The twenty members represented forty percent of the average adult attendance for Sunday morning worship.

The major components of the healthy relationship process were a pre-survey assessment from (Healthy church.org), Back to the Basics pretest and post-test, the healthy relationship workshop, three-week sermon series and Bible study, and journal

writing throughout the process, and reflective questions regarding the healthy relationship process. Each component of the healthy relationship process is briefly discussed below.

Pretest

The research team administered the Back to the Basics pretest. Twenty members were given a pre-assessment on the biblical process of how God related to His people in order to build healthy relationships with Him. A copy of the pretest can be found in the Appendix A. The pretest responses established a foundation for understanding what their knowledge of God's plan for restoration of healthy relationships was.

Healthy Relationship Workshop

An eight-week intervention, a series of three events, took place at Blooming Lighthouse Ministries from November 2014 to January 2014. Each of the interventions events is briefly described below:

A healthy relationship facilitator conducted the Healthy Relationship workshop on November 16, 2013, from 10:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M. The purpose of this workshop was to give participants tools for creating boundaries and expectations of developing healthy relationships. Dr. Hanna Walker, a licensed psychologist from Albany, Georgia led the workshop. Her credentials as a psychologist more than qualified her for the task. The expected outcome of the workshop was to mingle the members of Blooming Lighthouse ministries together with a qualified facilitator to help them identify and correct unhealthy relationships.

Getting Back to the Basics Sermon Series

The aim of the Getting Back to the Basics Sermon Series was to provide an exegetical study of specifically chosen text. The objective of the exegetical consideration of text was to give the members biblical strategies for restoring their congregation to God intended relationships. The sermons for this series are as follows: (A) Return of the God Man, Luke 2:27; (B) Why Should I Need God? Hebrews 12:16-17, 2, and (C) He Didn't Throw The Clay Away, Jeremiah 18:1-6. Each text establishes a definitive bases for God Centered Relationships.

Journal Writing

Journal writing helped the membership with personal growth and development. By regularly recording their thoughts, participants gained insight into their behaviors and moods. Journaling writing was used for problems solving and stress reduction. Journal writing was also used to improve mental and physical health of the participant and increase self-esteem. Journal writing was used to help promote the healing process that members needs in order to have healthy relationships. Context associates helped guide participants through the process.

Post-test

Following the intervention events, context associate administered the post-test to fifteen participants. Five of the targeted group of twenty did not participate because they were not in attendance. The post-test gave an approximate understanding of the participants of the blueprint that was needed to assessment their working knowledge of the biblical blueprint of restoration and God centered relationships.

Analysis of the Healthy Relationship Workshop

The healthy relationship workshop was implemented to develop and inspire habits in the participants that would be beneficial in the participants personal and cooperate growth.

This course gave careful examination of personal principles in the life the participants. This course familiarized the participants with concepts of adventure based programming including cooperative games, group initiative, problem-solving elements, and trust activities. These activities helped individuals and groups learn about concepts such as decision-making and problem solving, leadership and how to be a successful team player in order to maximize their potential. The participants learned new methods for cooperation and collaboration. The participants were required to fill out evaluation forms (appendix A) and share in a group discussion in a small group setting. The attendees were as follows: twenty-five people total; fifteen adult women ages twenty-five though sixty; eight adult men ages thirty through forty-five; two female teenagers ages seventeen and eighteen.

Analysis of Pretest/Post-test Data and Outcomes

Each of the participant's post-test grades was compared to the grade of the pretest. The pretest contained ten questions to gauge the participant's knowledge of God's biblical blueprint for restoration of healthy relationships. The test were multiple choice, true false, and fill in the blank, which tested the knowledge and memorization of the scriptures. The depth of knowledge on the pretest and post-test were rated as a level one. The average score of the pretest participants as a whole was fifty percent pass rate. Questions one through three, tested there understanding of biblical terms. Questions

seven through nine assessed the application of biblical concepts. Question ten assessed the participant's knowledge of scriptural memorization.

On the Pretest, the results were as follows

Question 1 — 100 %

Question 2 — 30%.

Question 3 — 50%.

Question 4 — 50%.

Question 6 — 60%.

Question 7 — 10%.

Question 8 — 10%.

Question 9 — 20%

Question 10 — 50%.

The post-test yielded the following results:

Question 1 — 100%.

Question 2 — 90%.

Question 3 — 90%.

Question 4 — 100%.

Question 5 — 90%.

Question — 100%

Question 7 — 100%.

Question 8 — 90%.

Question 9 — 90%.

Question 10 — 100%.

The data suggest notable positive change in the knowledge of the participants. But this does not show that the participants are willing to use that knowledge in there relationship towards one another. This test does show that the participants have a working idea of God's intentions for his people.

Analysis of Sermon Series and Bible Study Outcome

The Getting Back to the Basics provided an atmosphere for the congregants to confirm the scriptures as the biblical blueprint for building healthy relationships. The congregation was aloud to record the sermons to take with them to continue to refer back to for further inspiration. The Bible studies provided much needed question and answer sessions that allowed for clearing up deep-rooted misconceptions concerning the scriptures. The participants expressed the growth in their personal lives through coming and being apart of the process. The researcher noted significant increase in the attitude of a majority of the participants. There were also some of the participants that were stuck in their old ways from years of their own understandings. Some of the elder adult membership stop coming to the sessions because they felt they did not need the teaching and expressed it was too much like going back to school. The researcher believes it was do to the lack of education by those that could not read and take the test. Despite the decrease in numbers the researcher established through the sermon series and Bible study a meaningful, helpful, and safe environment that is conducive for healthy relationships.

Analysis of Journal Writing

The journal writing allowed each of the participants to document their daily progress, success and failures, and moods. They were allotted quiet time to put their feelings on paper. There was a bit of hesitation at first, but the hesitation quickly grew to expectation when the participants experienced the positive effects of journal writing. Some of the members were looking forward to coming before each session and recording their feelings. Some participants began to share more of their experiences. This showed trust developing among the participants.

The journal writing became an outlet to express and deal with their frustrations. After writing for those brief moments before class and sharing from their journals, the journal writing process became a perfect ice-breaker to deal with the issues that the members were having at the present time. This method defeated any chance for unhealthy relationships due to a lack of communication among the members.

Analysis of Reflective Discussion

Reflective discussion gave the participants an opportunity to talk about the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats that the healthy relationship process provided. This researcher still believes in the hypothesis that when leaders and their congregation take a journey to the way God intended relationships to be, they will grow exponentially and will continue to endure through hardships by the joy of their salvation in worship. Analysis of the participants' reflective discussions revealed their frequent use of words related to healthy relationships and relationship building, conviction of responsibility to securing healthy relationships for their congregation. Examples include

the following responses: “This class has changed my mind about what real church relationship is all about.” “I love my church members and my church now.”

The researcher perceived a higher level of enthusiasm and spirit in the congregants during the eight-week process. The process went through a decline in its participants by 5%. Despite this decrease this researcher believes that progress was still made through the participants that still remained based on the positive feedback from the leadership and membership testaments from the reflection and discussion period. This researcher believes that in the future, more members will realize and actualize the much needed understanding of how God intended for relationships to be.

Chapter Six

Reflection, Summary, and Conclusion

In chapter six, the researcher summarizes and reflects on the project. This chapter is the researcher's reflections of the implementation of the overall results of this project. The appendix has examples of pre/post-test, personal interviews, and Bible studies used in this project. A bibliography of resources is provided for this project.

What makes an unhealthy church? Is it the area in geography? Is it the size of the physical structure? Dr. Richard J. Krejcir tackles this problem in his essay and states that the big problem we have in most churches today surrounds the relationship between the leader and them members of the congregation. He also confirms this process that this research took the members of blooming lighthouse ministries when he states. "Healthy churches also have 20-40 percent of their church members in a Bible study or in small groups. In these small groups, the main curriculum has the leader teaching the Bible as the prime program, such as a Bible study or discussion on biblical precepts, and the Word is delved into. Churches that are unhealthy have little to no active participation in small groups, and/or the groups are using weak curriculum that does not teach or inform about biblical principles, and the Bible is used very little."

The outcome from these unhealthy relationships caused a revolving door effect for new members seeking a place in God's Kingdom to grow in their personal relationship with Him and become disciples of Jesus Christ.

There have been numerous cases in this researcher life that prove that unhealthy relationships can severely and sometimes fatally damage the life of even the most thriving congregations. There have been many mega churches that have been affected by unhealthy relationships between leadership and members. Church attendance and participation is more than getting up on a designated day, occupying pews, singing songs, going to alter call, and hearing a sermon. There is a need to get to know and love the people that we worship with. People may initially be drawn to a particular ministry by an invitation of a person, preaching, and praise and worship, but it takes proper Christian fellowship to create a ministry that transforms lives. Throughout this research the writer have discovered that healthy God centered relationships are a necessity in every ministry. Research conducted in this eight-week process reveals the following insights:

- Churches that are healthy have leadership that surrenders to the Lordship of Christ and builds their church on His foundation.
- Unhealthy churches tend to have leadership that is prideful and build their church on the foundation of their legacy or personality.
- Churches that are healthy tend to be focused on prayer and seeking what God has for them; they are interested in what God intends and the opportunities that are at hand.
- Unhealthy churches tend not to be focused on prayer, and they seek what they want, ignoring what God and His Word has for them.
- Churches that are healthy are in line with and in touch with Jesus Christ as Savior and LORD. The leaders and the people have an effectual sense of God's presence and seek Him out of gratitude for who he is and what He has done. Their growing faith and their joyful attitude in life evidences this.
- Unhealthy churches tend not to be interested or centered upon the Lordship and centrality of Christ. They are places of personality, leadership in control for personal agendas, and/or seeking trends contrary to the agenda or call of God's Word.

- Churches that are healthy have pastor(s) and leaders who are humble, exhibit patience and the Fruit of the Spirit, and have a strong sense of indebtedness to God and others.
- Unhealthy churches tend to have pastor(s) and leaders who are not humble, but rather seek formulas, trends, and do not feel indebtedness to God and/or others. Churches that are healthy have a mindset that spiritual formation and group and individual maturity are not achieved from programs or facilities, but rather from the knowledge and passion of our Lord working.
- Unhealthy churches tend to place their focus on programs over people. Churches that are healthy place God's priorities first.
- Unhealthy churches only desire to produce what the leaders want. Churches that are healthy see worship as a lifestyle and not just an experience.
- Unhealthy churches tend to see worship just as an experience and not an attitude or lifestyle.
- Churches that are healthy have leaders who do personal devotions, and for whom the study of God's Word is the foundation of their faith and practice.
- Unhealthy churches tend to have leaders who do not or do very little personal devotions, and negate the study of God's Word. Who they are in society, education, or pride are the foundations of management of their church.
- Churches that are healthy perceive Christ to be an active presence in their church and thus have pleasant conversations and activities in their halls and courtyard.
- Unhealthy churches tend not to seek Christ first in their church and thus have conversations filled with conflict and activities that are unhealthy or purposeless.
- Churches that are healthy have a strong sense of biblical value for faith in the practice of church and personal life. The Bible is real and relevant in the life of the leaders, so it is taught as well as caught from one another.
- Unhealthy churches tend to have a weak sense of biblical worth and see faith as just personal, not practiced in the life of the church. The Bible is seen as unrelated to church leadership and thus they seek substitutes from non-biblical or psychological/cultural sources.
- Churches that are healthy are pursuing the purpose for which God has created and called them to.

- Unhealthy churches tend to pursue the purpose the leaders want, personal agendas that are usually contrary to God's will and precepts or are unrealistic or ineffective.
- Churches that are healthy allow its people to know and exercise their spiritual gifts, and the strongest churches mentor their people further in them.
- Unhealthy churches tend to ignore its people's gifting and talents. Churches that are healthy have a sense of allowing God to work in and through their people to build a healthy, loving community.
- Unhealthy churches tend to coerce and manipulate. Life is all about Him and not about selfish ideas or perceptions. We have gone to His throne and His priestly duty has been received, our Milk, and then the meat is feasted upon, His wondrous precepts and truth. So our faith is real, personal, fully transformed and becoming fully engaged followers of Christ seen by a life well lived. If we want to be an impacting Christian pastor or lay leader in a church that impacts its community and world, we have to be eating the meat of God's precepts with passion and conviction, in love and in truth and then sharing it with others.

The time put in this project has transformed this researcher's thinking about church life. As a senior pastor, this process have brought much growth and enlightenment seeing the positive effects that have come out of this project.

Looking back over this writer on life, there is a direct correlation to the struggle that Blooming Lighthouse Ministries experienced. This process has also proven that much like this writers own life, this process will not be cleared up in an eight-week process, however, there are some phenomenal data and realizations that have taken place in the life of the members of Blooming Lighthouse Ministries and this writers.

The intent of this project was to create a healthy God centered relationship in the lives of the membership of Blooming Lighthouse Ministries. Coming into this process the

writer was bitter from an unhealthy experience that had produce similar problems in his

ministry.

This process was not initially welcomed by the membership of Blooming Lighthouse Ministries. The membership was apprehensive about new leadership coming in and changing their old way of life. There was a need for this researcher to meet with them as a whole and convey the overall intentions of the process and bring reassurance that participation was on a volunteer basis. After the reassurance, the members warmed up to the process and participated.

The process started with great participation that soon turned into a problem. There were members that were grossly against it and began to create problems by doing some of the unhealthy tactics to stop the program. They were having parking lot meeting to detour the ones who were optimistic about the process. They were also making slanderous remarks and boycotting the sessions. After continuous antics some of the participants were discouraged and stop attending. Despite all of this, the leadership and members as a whole encouraged the researcher to continue the process.

The process took the participants through an eye opening experience. As the process continued, the group began to bond with one another. They went from being participants to becoming a family. The meetings often would be emotional, hilarious, and soul stirring as they allowed themselves to become personally involved with the process. The participants began to go on outings with one another and do extra curricular activities. The attitude of just being church members slowly evaporated, and the reign of God's glory in their lives was visible as their relationship with one another and Him deepened. They seem happier and more on fire for God even in the face of disapproving

members.

Three weeks in the process some of the members of the group, which consisted of adult brothers, and sisters dropped out due to the ungodly slander that was taking place and they left the church. After this happened there was a need to put something in place to keep the group from falling apart. The writer asked the group members for suggestions. One member suggested strengthening the bond of the group relationship by starting a prayer line. In order to keep their spirits alive, they created a prayer group via a corporate prayer line that meet five days a week at the hours of 7:00 A.M., 12:00 P.M., and 6:00 P.M.; the researcher happily joined.

The effects of this prayer line created sustaining power to keep the researcher and the participants going. The group is still maintains the prayer line currently. This writer believes that it was this move by the group that causes them to make it through the entire eight-week process with continued success. This move by the group also confirmed the initial hypothesis of the researcher that God centered healthy relationships close the revolving door effect and create an atmosphere that is conducive to form meaningful relationships in the life of the church. This process was limited in the fact that it only used the African American ethnic group and a small population. The outcomes could vary depending on different age, ethnicity, and population.

Appendix A
Healthy Relationship Workshop Evaluation Form

Appendix A
Healthy Relationship Workshop Evaluation Form
Evaluation Form

1. Did you enjoy this Healthy Relationship workshop ____yes ____No

2. What Information was most helpful?

3. Before this class what was you idea of a healthy relationship?

4. After this class what is your idea of a healthy relationship?

5. Please share your comments or suggestions about your

instructor_____

APPENDIX B

**HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP AND PERSONAL GROWTH
WORKSHOP OUTLINE**

Appendix B

Healthy Relationship and Personal Growth Workshop Outline

Course Description

This course will give careful examination of personal principles in the life young successful youth. This course familiarizes students with concepts of adventure based programming including cooperative games, group initiative, problem-solving elements, and trust activities. These activities help individuals and groups learn about concepts such as decision-making and problem solving, leadership. And how to be a successful team player in order to maximize their potential. The student will learn new methods for cooperation and collaboration. The student will also be required to record daily events in a journal and share them to be discussed in a small group setting.

Course Curricula

Based on book by Stephen R. Covey, called *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Young People*

I. Be Proactive

(Principals of Personal Vision)

II. Begin with The End in Mind

(Principles of Personal Leadership)

III. Put First Things First

(Principles of Personal Management)

IV. Think Win/Win

(Principles of Interpersonal Leadership)

V. Seek First to Understand, Then Understood

(Principles of Empathic Communication)

VI. Synergize

(Principles of Creative Cooperation)

VII. Sharpen the Saw

(Principles of Balanced Self-Renewal)

APPENDIX C
RESTORATION PRETEST

APPENDIX C RESTORATION PRETEST

- 1) RENEW is
 - a) revive
 - b) make new spiritually
 - c) restore to existence
- 2) REVIVAL is
 - a) restoration of force
 - b) a series of meetings
 - c) a special campaign
- 3) RESTORATION is a going _____.

TRUE or FALSE:

- 4) Restoration will always take you ahead
- 5) Restoration takes you back
- 6) Restoration brings you back to where you should have been all along
- 7) What book in the bible should we look back to in expecting revival?
- 8) The generation that left Egypt
 - a) perished in the wilderness
 - b) was filled with faith
 - c) returned to Egypt
- 9) WHY?
 - a) they were faithless
 - b) they were followers of Caleb and Joshua
 - c) the new Pharaoh invited them to return
- 10) Write out II Chronicles 7:14

APPENDIX D

RESTORATION PRETEST

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RESTORATION PRETEST

- 1) RENEW is
 - a) revive
 - b) make new spiritually
 - c) restore to existence
- 2) REVIVAL is
 - a) restoration of force
 - b) a series of meetings
 - c) a special campaign
- 3) RESTORATION is a going _____.

TRUE or FALSE:

- 4) Restoration will always take you ahead
- 5) Restoration takes you back
- 6) Restoration brings you back to where you should have been all along
- 7) What book in the bible should we look back to in expecting revival?
- 8) The generation that left Egypt
 - a) perished in the wilderness
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- 9) WHY?
 - a) they were faithless
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- 10) Write out II Chronicles 7:14

APPENDIX E

BIBLE STUDY SERIES: “BACK TO THE BASICS”

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RETURN OF THE GOD MAN

There is so many questions concerning man now a days such as where did he come from. Why is he here. And one of the most popular questions is where are all the Good men located. For some have even dared 2 say that a Good man is hard 2 find. This statement further suggest that man is not dead but he is simply missing. He missing in our homes his missing in our community, he is missing more importantly in our churches. Where is that man that Genesis talks about that has so much dominion.

As we compare man as he was and man as he is there is a major metaphysis that has taken place. (image and likeness of God are introduced by God as that after which He creates him. And it is repeated, "so God created man in his own image.) The cloud represents the manifestation of the cloud which is visible but not tangible (Gods Sprit) The fire rep. The Power or Force of God.(Gods likeness)There is a change but Not for his good in John Cha 3 even in the mind of the keenist mind of all Jews in Nicodemus not that man have strayed from the heavenly blueprint. We No longer long look, Act, Rule. (Like God). For the man in Genesis had something that the missing or lost man if u will does not have and that God Shekinah Glory!

The Hebrews had a special word for the cloudy or fiery manifestation of the Divine Presence; they called it "Shekinah," the glory of the Lord.¹

When Gods Shekinah Glory was with the people Man had dominion over things, Man had courage 2 face his fears, Man was lead out bondage. It was through this Shekinah Glory that Man had his Greatest Miracles and Triumphs.

There is hope for the return of man found in Luke 2:27. For Simeon is excited in the text because what had been Gone so long has now returned.

When man returned

I. His Rest Returned. Man because of sin had to deal with the consequence of sin he had 2 work by the sweat of his brow. When God rested manifested his Shekinah Glory in the form of pillar of Cloud by day and pillar of Fired by night. Moses was the leader he was suppose 2 b. The people of God was the followers they were

suppose 2 be. Exodus 14:14. Hold your peace the lord will fight 4 u. Rest. Daniel rested in the Lions Den. Hebrew boys Rested in the fiery furnace.

II. Restoration came back

When man got lost he lost his possessions. Things were taken from him. He lost his character he lost his respect. He lost his position of Dominion Genesis said he was 2 b over the fowls of the air. Over the Beast of the earth. But now man under. Under paid under the weather in sickness under addictions and the only thing he's over is work.

III. Redemption

When man return his redemption return it was not intended that man should die as the beast and the fowl. For he was created in the likeness of God. But when the child return man was redeemed. What can was away the sins of man what can make me whole again. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

SERMON TWO
WHY SHOULD I NEED GOD
Hebrews 12:16-17

You may be surprised if I tell you that not all godless people are bad. But they just don't want to commit their lives to God for some reasons. They consider being a freelance as an advantage.

In fact, godless people consider themselves a practical people. They have more times for themselves since they don't have to come to church. They have more freedom since they don't have to believe that there is God who will put into judgment everything that they have done. They are free to spend more extra time for their pleasures and there is no conscience whatsoever to bother them if they commit anything against morality.

If being godless is practically an advantage, then why should I need to believe in God? Why should I need to surrender my life to God, obey His word and do His will?

Let us read our text today about a man named Esau, the man who was called godless by the bible.

Heb 12:16 Make sure that no one is immoral or godless like Esau. He traded his birthright as the oldest son for a single meal.

Heb 12:17 And afterward, when he wanted his father's blessing, he was rejected. It was too late for repentance, even though he wept bitter tears.

Though Esau has been called by the bible as godless but he is not necessarily a bad person. Like many other common neighbor today, Esau is a good son, a good brother and maybe a good citizen. However, he was called godless because he decided to live his life without God.

Esau is a self sufficient man. He can carry himself alone. He is a hunter, a man with probably has strong physical built and a brave heart. His own ability to live without any help from others tends him to decide to live on his own. Though he has a grand father who has been called the father of faith (Abraham) and a father who is highly favored by God (Isaac), a brother who has been blessed by God (Jacob) but we did not see a single time that Esau prays, worship or built any altar for the Lord of his fathers.

Based on our scripture text today, let us see the first reason why we need God in our lives. We need God because:

I. PERSON WITHOUT GOD IS LIKE A WANDERING SHEEP IN THE DESERT WITHOUT SHEPHERD

Heb 12:16 ...“godless like Esau”...

Godless Esau is a mirror of many people today. Godless means they do not have God in their lives. They do not want to obey God. They want to do their own thing. Esau is motivated by his love for this world. He doesn't care for his eternal future. He doesn't care God. He doesn't care for spiritual ways. He doesn't care for his soul.

Godless people are like wandering sheep in the desert without shepherd. They want all the freedom to do all what is pleasing to their eyes. They don't want any master to tell them what they should do. They hate the idea of keeping any divine laws hence they reject the idea of having a God who must be obeyed and followed.

But those people are also vulnerable to the attack of the enemy. They have no shepherd to protect them when the beast of the field attacks. They are helpless and powerless without the hedge of God's protection.

Those people wants blessing but they don't want to yield to do God's will. When disaster and problems comes, they blame God for not protecting them. Those people want to use God. They want God to bless them but they do not want to surrender their lives to God. They don't want to make Jesus their Lord and King of their lives.

Using the life of godless Esau, let us see the second reason why we need God in our lives:

II. PERSON WITHOUT GOD MAKE A DEAD WRONG DECISION

Hebrews 12:16 “He traded his birthright as the oldest son for a single meal”

Esau chooses the wrong priority. He is interested only for what can satisfy the longing of his flesh. He cares only for his stomach and he doesn't care for the things that will please God.

Esau's attention is focus only on the things of this world. In Hebrew legend; Esau had

come to be looked upon as the entirely sensual man, the man who put the needs of his body first. Legend says that while Jacob and Esau were twins and were still in their mother's womb, Jacob said to Esau: "My brother, there are two worlds before us, this world and the world to come. In this world men eat and drink and traffic and marry and bring up sons and daughters; but all this does not take place in the world to come. If you like, take this world and I will take the other." And Esau was well content to take this world, because he did not believe that there was any other

Esau is a picture of a person who decides to choose the wrong pleasure. Instead of delighting himself in the Lord, his heart has been ensnared by his worldly appetite. There is no hunger for righteousness; there is no burning desire to please the God who created him.

On the contrary, the bible advises God's people to: "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He will give you the desires and secret petitions of your heart." Ps 37:4

In fact making God our first priority is connected with the promise of God's provision of all our need: "and he will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern." Mat 6:33

Now, the third reason why we need God is:

III. PERSON WITHOUT GOD FORFEIT THEIR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE –

Heb 12:17 "And afterward, when he wanted his father's blessing, he was rejected."...

- He throw out his spiritual blessing for the sake of his physical need
- He traded his eternal inheritance for temporary pleasures.
- He fed the hunger of his flesh but ignore the longing of his soul

A man throws away his divine inheritance when he throws away his hope for eternity. Esau traded his eternal inheritance for his appetite for temporary thing. Many people today wasted their life and future with God because of their desire to satisfy their flesh. The bible said:

Mar 8:36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life in the eternal kingdom of God?

Lastly, the fourth reason why we need God is because:

IV. PERSON WITHOUT GOD BROUGHT HEART-ACHES AND TROUBLES TO HIS OWN LIFE

Heb 12:17 ...“It was too late for repentance, even though he wept bitter tears.”

People without God makes the wrong decisions, those wrong decisions brought troubles and problems on their lives. A godless life sends many to jail! A godless life created broken families! A godless life makes broken dreams and ruin lives! A godless life makes your heart empty and always longing for something that can satisfy the secret hunger of your soul.

Furthermore, a godless life makes cruel kings and rulers, a godless life make bad leaders of nations, institutions and organizations. A godless life brought suffering that affects many peoples.

Sermon 3
He Did Throw the Clay Away!

Scripture Reading: Jeremiah 18:1-6

He was 21 years old. By all appearances he was living life to the fullest. Parties, drinking, living it up. He was young and full of life. He had a bright future ahead of him. Although this was the appearance to many, inside a war was going on. The parties were no longer satisfying, the alcohol no longer enough, the friends were there when he would buy their drinks, and his family—well he hadn't seen his mother since he was a young boy and his father was not much of one. He was only 21, but inside of his exterior confidence an interior battle was being fought. He began to feel hopeless. He had no reason to live. Why should he go on. There is nothing in this life for me. So one day he had had enough. He could no longer bear the emptiness that he felt on the inside. So he went to his lonely apartment room, and set on the edge of his bed. He pulled out his 22 revolver pointed it at his chest and pulled the trigger.

Have you ever felt like a complete failure? Do you ever wonder what you are alive for? Has life seemingly passed you by? Do you lie awake at night and wonder why your life has turned out the way it has?

Maybe at one point in your life you had big dreams. You were going to go places. You wanted a big house, a nice job, the perfect husband or wife, and a bunch of chubby little kids who were all little angels. Instead, you got a shack for a house, your marriage is a wreck, and you can't work because you have too many little brats to take care of. So now, you lay awake and wonder why? Why live? Why fight this battle anymore? Maybe it's not even what I've talked about so far . . . whatever it may be, it doesn't really matter. It all adds up to the same conclusion—hopelessness.

In our world today many feel like their existence means nothing. Many are simply empty shells of brokenness. Oh, they paste a smile on their faces, and laugh their way through life, or maybe they become depressed and withdraw from it all. Suicides occur everyday at unprecedented rates. From the front page of the newspaper to the deep, hidden corners of the human heart a cry is going up. It's the searching, longing cry of a culture and, in fact, a world in crisis. Where is the hope? Where is the peace? Where is the purpose and meaning for life here in the real world?

Many of you feel like you have messed up too many times. God would never forgive me now. I've gone too far. Waited too long. Perhaps the Potter of your life has thrown the clay away. Have you ever wondered if maybe the clay of your life has been thrown

away? Well I have good news, God has not thrown the clay of your life away. God has come to make your vessel all that it was intended to be, and today he wants to

1. Redeem the Vessel.

Redeem means to buy back. God desires to buy back the broken pieces of your life. It doesn't matter how broken up your life may be. It doesn't matter what you have done, or where you have been. God wants to buy you back. The Master of all potter's wants to redeem you vessel. He has provided the redemption plan for your life. He doesn't care what you've done, or the mess you've made. He wants to buy you back.

Jesus Christ paid the debt that was necessary for our salvation. There was once a Russian officer having become hopelessly involved in debt, sat down in desperation and wrote out a list of his indebtedness. Summing up the whole, he wrote in despair at the bottom, "Who can pay such a debt as this?" That night the emperor passed through the barracks in disguise and seeing the paper beside the sleeping man, read it, and wrote at the end of the question the one word Nicholas! In the morning the officer wondered who had done it, but all doubts vanished when at ten o'clock the emperor sent the cash necessary for the heavy payment. Unsaved people, you are in debt also. Think of your sins, how much you owe your Lord, and when in despair you say, "Who can pay such a debt?" then whisper the name of Jesus. He can pay it. He has paid it. Jesus paid it all, Yes, all the debt you owe!

Martin Luther said this, "God, then, is more earnest for me to be saved than I am to be saved! "He so loved the world that He gave His Son" (see John 3:16). He loved not saints, not penitents, not the religious, not those who love Him; but "the world," secular men, profane men, hardened rebels, hopeless wanderers and sinners! He gave not a mere promise, not an angel to teach us, not a world to ransom us, but His Son--His only begotten! So much did God love the world, sinners, me! I believe this. I must believe it; I believe on Him who says it. How can I, then, do otherwise than rejoice?"

You may not think you are worth a thing. You may feel like you could just drop off of the face of the earth and no one would miss you. But I know someone who cares. I know someone who loved you enough that he provided the plan to redeem your broken vessel. He gave of His own Son to buy back the broken pieces of your life. He loved you enough that he gave of his own blood to redeem your vessel.

2. Repair you Vessel.

Not only does the Lord desire to redeem your vessel, but he wants to repair it. He doesn't throw the clay away. He repairs it. When everyone else says you are worth nothing. Your life's a failure. God says he wants to repair your vessel into something worthwhile.

Human nature is too bad to be improved, too dilapidated to be repaired. Here is a cracked bell. How can it be restored? By one of two methods. The first is to repair the bell, to surround it with bands. Nevertheless, you can easily tell that there is a crack in the bell by the crack of the sound. The only effective way to repair the bell is to remelt, and recast it, and make it all new; then it will ring clear. And human nature is a bell, suspended high up in the steeple of creation, to ring forth the praises of the Creator.

But in the fall in Eden the bell cracked. How can it be restored? By one of two ways. One is to surround it with outward laws and regulations, as with steel hoops. This is the method adopted by philosophy, and without doubt there is a marked improvement in the sound. Nevertheless, the crack in the metal shows itself in the crack of the tone. The best way is to remelt it, recast it, remold it; and this is God's method in the Gospel. He remelts our being, refashions us, makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus, zealous unto good works; and by and by we shall sound forth His praises in a nobler, sweeter strain than ever we did before. Heaven's high arches will be made to echo our anthems of praise. Do you feel like a cracked bell? A broken piece of pottery? God has come to repair you vessel. When everyone else says that you are worthless, God says you are worth everything. He wants to take the broken pieces of your life and remake them into something new. He can take the worst of homes, and make them peaceful. He can take the worst of addicts, clean. He can take a wrecked marriage and put it back together again. What makes you think he can't remake your life?

A psychiatrist who visited a rescue mission listened intently to the testimonies of many converts. The superintendent asked him if he would like to say a word. This is what he said: "Tonight I have been given an opportunity to observe something I did not know existed anywhere. It has been my privilege to listen to the testimony of men who were glad to witness to what Christ had done for them. I know nothing about that, but I confess I cannot otherwise explain what has taken place in their lives. A few of these men I recognize. As drunkards, even as dope addicts, some of them have come under my observation at the hospital. But here they are, alive, well-dressed, delivered, and in their right minds. I do not know how the miracle has been wrought, but of one thing I am confident--nothing in science can account for this change in them. That kind of gospel is worth preaching to anyone, anywhere."

Friends, Jesus Christ is still in the life changing business. He can still make people into new creatures in Christ Jesus! If your life is a mess this morning, and you don't know where to turn. Jesus Christ is the answer! He wants to redeem your vessel, and he wants to repair it today.

3. Refill your vessel.

Not only does God want to redeem and refill your vessel. But God wants to refill your vessel. That emptiness that you have felt, God desires to fill. The lonely worthlessness, he wants to fill. God desires to come inside your heart and fill it with what has been missing. He doesn't just want to buy your vessel and repair it and have a nice keepsake to sit around, but he wants to fill you up with his spirit in order to be used of him. A king who wished to express his affection for a private soldier of his army gave him a richly jeweled cup, his own cup. The soldier, stepping forth to receive the gift, exclaimed shamefacedly, "This is too great a gift for me to receive." "It is not too great for me to give," the king replied. So Christ offers us this infinite gift of the Holy Spirit to cleanse and fill our hearts and to abide with us. Think then how much He must have cared that we receive it.

You know, I don't understand this kind of love for me. I am not worthy. My love was a mess of broken pieces. I was raised in a Christian home. I always wanted to be a Christian. Yet my life was broken. I felt useless, hopeless, I didn't think God would ever want me. Yet he did. God took the broken pieces of my life. He bought them back with his blood shed on a old rugged cross. He has repaired my broken vessel. And he has filled me with his holy Spirit. Today he desires to do the same for you.

Your life can be made over again. He can take you and remake you into something useful.

Your life may be in shambles, your hope may be gone. But Jesus Christ wants to refill your soul with hope. He doesn't throw the clay away on anyone. There is hope for you this morning!

APPENDIX F

JOURNAL REFLECTIONS

Appendix F

Journal Dialog and Reflections.

1. Is it our responsibility to please God or Man?

Reponses:

"I believe that God wants us to please him by serving man." (25 year old adult male)

"God told us to put him first in everything, we should serve Him." (42 year old Male)

"I believe we should do both because God says what you have done to the least of them you have done also unto me." (35 year old Female)

"I don't know what God want, sometimes I believe he wants me to please him and man. (55 year old Male)

2. What should a member do to resolve conflict in the church?

"I believe we should tell the pastor and let him deal with it. (45 year single mother)

"I believe it is the deacon's place to deal with the conflict that's why they are deacons." (37 year old Male)

"I believe people should not involve anybody but the person that they have the conflict with, Go to them. I wouldn't say anything I would just stop coming for a while." (27 year old female)

3. What is your ideal church?

"I would love to find a church that hosts a singles group. Church is about bringing everyone together and closer to God. To me that would be a great way to bring the singles community together in hopes to find happiness. I couldn't think of a better place to meet someone to be honest. Anyone know of a church that does this?" (29 year old Single Mother)

"A church that works as a whole not back stabbers and has a good young program. Yea right doesn't exist." (27 year old male)

"I would also like my church to be pastured by a true, honest, ordained man of God. One that teaches, as well as preaches. One that is above reproach and not prideful. One that despises lying, and adultery. One that can be easily approached with problems. One that KNOWS the bible inside and out. One that is educated. One that takes the literal word of God and divides that word to best honor the Father. One who's family is respected and lives like a pastor's family. One that don't put on a show for his parishioners. One that cares enough about his church to build it. One that truly loves people. One that can recognize his failures and make corrections. If you know where I can find this, I'd love to know where it is!"

4. How has this process affected your Life?

"The best and most wonderful step of all those presented in this process is the idea to love each other well, "loving well" because that is what Jesus did and what He call us to do as well. The important and most amazing thing is that none of us can get to that place of loving well until we work through the biblical blue print. These steps are laid out in a simple, honest and easily digestible fashion that anyone can appreciate and which pastors and church leaders should embrace." (35 year old female)

This process has layed out a critical issue that dramatically effects churches today. As I went through this I realized that so many of my church experiences had been effected due to the emotional "unhealth" of those in leadership and congregations. This model should be use in seminaries and in the leadership teams of all churches today. 37 year old male

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